

**CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN A COMMUNIST
CONTEXT : A STUDY OF THE THEOLOGICAL
WRITINGS OF JOSEF L. HROMADKA AND JAN
M. LOCHMAN FROM 1948 TO 1969, AND THEIR
RELEVANCE TO THE CHURCHES IN HONG
KONG FACING 1997**

Lap Yan Kung

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
at the
University of St Andrews



1991

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A THESIS PRESENTED BY

LAP YAN KUNG

TO

THE FACULTY OF ST.MARY'S COLLEGE OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF SAINT ANDREWS IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY [MODE A]

SAINT ANDREWS, SCOTLAND

OCTOBER 1990



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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses, assesses and reflects upon Christian witness in a particular communist context- that of Czechoslovakia from 1948 to 1969- and its possible relevance to Hong Kong when the People's Republic of China resumes the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong on July 1, 1997. This is carried out through a study of the theological writings of Josef L.Hromadka [1889-1969] and Jan M.Lochman [1922-]. Christian witness is understood in three ways. Firstly, its form is described as a theology of mission; secondly, its approach is seen as contextual as regards a). relevance, b). comprehensiveness and c). practicability; thirdly, its nature is a call for discipleship. These characteristics serve as the criteria for this study.

This thesis is divided into two parts: The first is a study of Hromadka and Lochman; and the second is a theological reflection on the context of the churches in Hong Kong facing 1997. The approach of the first part is not that of a comparative study between Hromadka and Lochman, but rather one which looks at the way in which they supplement each other. Hromadka and Lochman both adopt the same attitude towards communism and each of them contributes to the understanding of Christian witness in a communist context. The argument shows how they take their situations seriously, and try to find out the meaning of history in terms of its significance, not of its direction. Furthermore, in a communist context which is hostile to religion, they are not frightened by the so-called end of the Constantinian era, but instead welcome it as an opportunity for the Church to break through all kinds of traditional chains and social barriers and to function as a real Church. They support communism

because they consider it as a step towards humanization; but they err in seldom criticizing the injustice of communist governments. In addition, their theological reflection is never merely an intellectual activity, but they put it into practice through their work for the Christian Peace Conference and for Christian-Marxist dialogue. The thesis employ the term "Prague line Theology" to describe the theology of Hromadka and Lochman in general which is seen as a form of political theology, a people's theology and a theology of the paradox of the unconditional "YES" and definite "NO" of the Gospel.

In the second part, the relevance and importance of Hromadka and Lochman to the Hong Kong churches are discussed as follows. Christian witness implies, first of all, an examination of one's own faith; it demands social responsibility, promotes reconciliation, brings hope to the world, stands with the people and it requires Christians to take sides. A convergence between Hromadka and Lochman on the one hand and the Christians of Hong Kong on the other hand does not mean a blind transplantation of the Czechoslovak experience into the Hong Kong context, but rather a stimulus to the Hong Kong churches to do their own theology. In order to be able to manifest a living and energetic Christian witness in an era of fear and uncertainty, the Hong Kong churches must take seriously two aspects of their situation, namely, the historical "wound" of the people of Hong Kong and the need for the "modernisation" of China. A theological reflection in this context therefore needs to examine the understanding of the relationship between theology and history, and that between Christian hope and humanization in a dialectical way; that is, the Church starts from examining its inner life, making a concrete contribution to society, and finally working with the world for a better and humanized society.

DECLARATIONS

I certify that Mr. Lap Yan Kung has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution of the University Court, 1967, No.1 (as amended), and is qualified to submit this thesis in application for the degree of Master of Philosophy (Mode A).

Rev. Steven G.Mackie
Supervisor of Studies

I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance General No.12 and as a candidate for the degree of M.Phil. (Mode A) under Resolution of the University Court, 1967, No.1 (as amended) on October 1, 1989 and April 18, 1990 respectively.

Lap Yan Kung
Candidate

The following thesis is based on the result of research carried on by myself, is my own composition, and has not previously been presented for a higher degree. The research was carried out in the University of St.Andrews under the supervision of Rev. Steven G.Mackie.

Lap Yan Kung
Candidate

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When a dissertation finally finds its way to completion, there are so many to thank that it would be impractical to try to note them all. I will then acknowledge only a few knowing full well how many others have been omitted.

Being puzzled whether or not to study abroad, I have a lot of friends in Hong Kong who removed my uncertainties and affirmed my dream. More than that, they provided finances to allow me to remain in St.Andrews for the duration of the residency requirements. Without their unceasing prayer and compassionate concern, I cannot imagine how I can finish the course requirement.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Rev. Steven G.Mackie for being such a fine supervisor. He introduced me to J.L.Hromadka and J.M.Lochman. His guidance and wisdom were invaluable. Without his patience and vigilance, this study should never been completed.

My sincerest thanks also goes to Mr. & Mrs. David and Lorele Lee for the fellowship that they shared with me and my wife; and Mr. Kenneth Mackay and Miss Clare Salters for their help with my English.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my wife, Shiu Wan, whose support and constant faith in me never wavered. More importantly, she joins me in the pilgrimage of faith.

Surely, gratitude is the memory of the heart and to all those who made a dream come true but remain unmentioned, you, too, have my grateful thanks.

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INTRODUCTION

The fundamental stimulus for my research of the theological writings of Josef L.Hromadka and Jan M.Lochman is the fact that Hong Kong will revert to the People's Republic of China in 1997. The purpose of my research is, on the one hand, to study how J.L.Hromadka and J.M.Lochman understood and reflected on what the state of Christian witness in Czechoslovakia from 1948 to 1969 was, and on the other hand, to reflect on how the Hong Kong churches in the light of Czechoslovak experience should interpret Christian witness in facing 1997. It is not my purpose here to use the study of the theological writings of Hromadka and Lochman as a *means* of achieving a theological reflection by the churches in Hong Kong facing 1997; but rather to apply their Biblical insights and findings to stimulate the Hong Kong churches into finding their unique path of Christian witness. This application is not a direct transplantation of Czechoslovak experience into the Hong Kong soil. Therefore, it is my purpose to make a serious independent but related study of the theological writings of Hromadka and Lochman, on the one hand and a theological reflection on the context of the churches in Hong Kong facing 1997, on the other hand.

Like the churches in other communist countries, the churches in China and Hong Kong have two contrasting responses to Christian witness in a communist context. One response is to consider the Chinese Communist Government as working for the welfare of the people, and therefore, to urge the churches to co-operate with the Government. This view is represented by Bishop Ting and the "Three-Self Patriotic Movement".¹ Sometimes, this view may be criticized as opportunist.

1 In an article "Theological Reflections in a Socialist Context", Mr Z.Y.Cheung- Professor of Nanjing Theological Seminary- said

The other view is that the Chinese Communist Government is an enemy of the churches or holds that Christian faith has nothing to do with worldly affairs, and therefore, prefers an antagonistic or non-cooperative attitude to the Government and worldly affairs. This view is represented by Wang Meng Dao and Watchman Nee. As far as I know, the latter view is widely held by the churches in Hong Kong.² They describe the relationship between the churches and the Chinese Communist regime as "*fire and water*".³ Biblically, they use 2Cor.6:14-16 to justify their view:

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness! What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols."

In this understanding, then, a faithful Christian witness is to oppose, denounce and adopt a non-co-operative attitude to communist governments. Otherwise, Christians are either betrayers of faith or conformists. But I think that a "*faithful witness*" should not be understood so literally and legally. A faithful Christian witness does not solely depend on how one acts publicly. It goes deeper; that is, it examines one's inner motivation and mentality. I think that it is more than an error, it is perhaps a basic fault if the churches regard non-co-operation and antagonism as the only possible form of Christian witness in a communist context. This neglects the positive

of the Chinese Communist Government that it "cares for the people, promotes justice and stresses on disciplines which make a far-reaching impact on the theological reflection of the churches in China."

See *Message*, Vol.123, March, 1990, Hong Kong Christian Council, p.5 [Chinese edition].

- 2 This is reflected among those Christian institutions in Hong Kong which concern the churches in China. Most of them hold a negative position towards the Chinese Government and a suspicious attitude towards the "Three-Self Patriotic Movement". For instance, the Chinese Churches Research Study Center, Witness Communication Ltd.
- 3 A Chinese saying referring to the unbridgeable and antagonistic relation in nature.

and constructive side of the Gospel, and responsibility for the welfare of the people. Although I realize how brutal communist governments can be in the violation of human rights, I would still insist that a faithful Christian witness should not be so one-sidedly negative and defensive. More importantly, the mission of the Church is to bring reconciliation and to promote peace, rather than to exacerbate hatred. The purpose of my research is to show that the model of co-operation with communist governments can still be a faithful Christian witness and to reject any narrow-minded understanding of Christian witness as merely co-operation or non-co-operation. This is also my basic view of J.L.Hromadka and J.M.Lochman; that is, their theological reflection is a struggle which attempts to look for an appropriate expression of Christian witness in a communist context, rather than the reaction of opportunists or conformists [although some have regarded them as one-sided and too defensive of communist governments].

The reasons for my study of these two Czech theologians instead of other eastern European theologians are as follows. Firstly and principally, the writings of J.L.Hromadka and J.M.Lochman on Christian witness in a communist context are neither opportunists' writings nor purely academic works. More importantly, this is something to which they devoted their lives. They present a constructive and forward looking understanding of Christian faith, rather than a negative and defensive one. Secondly, there is no doubt that their theological works concerning Christian witness in a communist context in comparison with other eastern European theologians are more systematic and rich in quality and quantity. Lochman, and especially Hromadka, can be considered as spokesmen for this theological approach from the 1940s onwards; that is, a positive understanding of communism and

acknowledgement of the failure of the Church to the issues of social justice in the past. Thirdly, even though they wrote in Czech, their major works are available in English and German. It is because they wanted to remove the misunderstandings of the West towards communist countries, that it was important for them to communicate with the western world. For instance, they commenced publishing "*Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia*" monthly in 1954. Therefore, although I cannot read Czech, their works in English and German provide me with a clear and full picture of their theological thoughts. The reason for studying the theological writings of both theologians instead of one is simply because on the one hand, they adopt the same attitude towards communist governments, and yet on the other hand, each of them has a significant contribution to make in providing a more comprehensive understanding of what Christian witness in a communist context is. Thus, my approach is not a comparative but a supplementary study. That means that in the 1940s and the 1950s [the era of Stalinism], Hromadka's writings were mainly in an effort to de-ideologize Marxism and de-mythologize Christianity. In the 1960s, with the pioneer work of Hromadka and the retirement of Hromadka in 1964, and the change of political atmosphere in the 1960s, Lochman's writings paid more attention to such themes as democratization, humanization and social theology. Thus, they supplement each other. The period from 1948 to 1969 I choose simply for historical reasons. 1948 was the year when Czechoslovakia became a communist country and when Hromadka and Lochman began to consider what Christian witness was. 1969 was the year when their writings ended. Hromadka died in that year and Lochman left Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Simply speaking, witness means that one who may be called to testify to an event at which one was present. In the New Testament,

the Greek word for witness is "*martus*" which is the root from which the word martyrdom stems. In these two understandings of the word, Christian witness can be understood in three ways. Firstly, the form of Christian witness concerns a theology of mission. According to K.Barth, the original and real witness therefore is God himself in Christ- *Missio Dei*. Man becomes a witness on the basis of the atonement and of the divine calling. The witness belongs to the calling, and the calling is a sign of grace. A withdrawal from mission thus signifies a withdrawal from grace rather than from duty. The true Christian cannot "*not-witness*". Witness is the essence of the Christian's ministry to, and involvement in the world. Its mission can be subdivided into "*Kerygma*", "*Koinonia*", "*Diakonia*" and "*Leitourgia*". These are neither in contradiction with nor independent from each other. It is because God's word is a resounding deed and his deed is a visible and tangible word.

Secondly, the approach of Christian witness is contextualized. It is never an abstract theological and intellectual reflection, but the context indicates where our emphasis ought to be and the circumstances dictate the way in which our witness has to be communicated. For witness to be effective, it should meet three criteria. These are "*relevance*", "*comprehensiveness*" and "*practicability*". Theology is based on changeless Truth, yet not on timeless interpretation of that Truth. The aim of theological reflection is not only to increase knowledge and understanding, but also to present a relevant and challenging interpretation. What matters is not only that we should know, but also, and above all, that we can interpret theology in a clear and understandable way. This requires a deep knowledge of real people as they live, struggle, labour, rejoice, lament and hope in ordinary life. That demands an

exegesis of *history* and that is what "*relevance*" means. "*Comprehensiveness*" means that any theological reflection should consider as much biblical thought as possible in order not to present a one-sided and partial Truth. This is what frequently happens in some forms of radical theology, like liberation theology which appears to stress one side of the situation of mankind- the economic and social oppression of the people [although this is important]- but neglects the others. It is not my purpose to encourage a "*theology of balance*" which includes all Christian doctrines. Rather, I want to stress that to select several themes of the Bible in isolation from others is to distort the Gospel. "*Practicability*" means that witness should be able to apply the result of the theological reflection. Its result is never an idealistic suggestion, but is a "*praxis*". Robin Gill writes:

Praxis maintains that Christian beliefs necessarily involve Christian action and that this action moulds one's understanding of the beliefs. Praxis implies that critical reflection is not some optional extra which can be left to those who teach academic theology. But it also implies that those who do teach academic theology should themselves be involved in the action.⁴

Thirdly, the nature of Christian witness is a call for discipleship. Witness- "*martyria*"- means the way of the Cross. It was not in Jesus' successful preaching to the masses, neither in the sometimes overwhelmingly positive reaction to his miracles, but in his suffering and death that he became the true Missionary. Christian witness is not a matter of objective theological activity and analysis, but there is a need for a subjective individual involvement.

The above understandings serve as a methodology for me to assess the theology of Hromadka and Lochman and to reflect theologically on the situation of the churches in Hong Kong facing 1997.

4 Robin Gill, *Beyond Decline* (London: SCM, 1988), p.6.

J.L.Hromadka [1889-1968] was a very controversial figure in Christian ecumenical circles because of his positive attitude towards communism and his defensive position towards communist governments. His argument was that the rise of communism stemmed from the failure of the Church to respond to social injustice in the past and of the Democratic West to curb social exploitation. Communism should not be regarded as parallel to Nazism, but it was a result of an age-long desire of social justice. Communists were on the side of the people. Therefore, he urged the Church to repent of its failures, to take "history" seriously and to support communist governments wholeheartedly for the welfare of the people. Some regarded him as a philosopher of history instead of a theologian and an agent of communist governments instead of a prophet of the Word of God. In Chapter One, I will examine Hromadka's view of communism, his theological emphases, and the comments made about his work.

J.M.Lochman [1922-] is less controversial than Hromadka. The denunciation of Stalinism in the late 1950s and the opening of Christian-Marxist dialogue provided grounds for Lochman to formulate his theological thoughts in a new era. He stressed "*The Civilian Proclamation*" [*Zivile Verkundigung*] and "*The Lordship of Jesus Christ in the Secularized world*" which were distinctive theological reflections. In Chapter Two, I will discuss factors which influenced his theological thought and how contextually he carried out his theological reflection. In Chapter Three, I will bring my discussions concerning Hromadka and Lochman together to examine their practical application of Christian witness in a communist context. Special references will be given to the Christian Peace Conference and Christian-Marxist dialogue. In addition, I will also present a discussion of their theological standpoint- the "Prague-Line

Theology"- as a whole. Finally, in Chapter Four, I will discuss their importance and relevance to the churches in Hong Kong facing 1997. Firstly, I will sort out the convergence between the theological responses and views of Hromadka and Lochman on the one hand, and the churches in Hong Kong on the other hand. Secondly, I will examine the situation in Hong Kong and discuss what Christian witness in Hong Kong in the shadow of 1997 will mean.

Since the changing of the political structures of eastern Europe in Autumn 1989 and the denunciation of communism, some people argue that history proves that the view of Hromadka and his followers is fatally wrong. But I do not agree with their view. Firstly, I think that they do not take enough into consideration the events in Czechoslovakia since 1968- the "Prague Spring", the Soviet invasion and "Normalization"- and their significances in the present Czechoslovak situation. Secondly, it is a total misunderstanding to consider Hromadka's and Lochman's view solely as a category of communism without making any reference to their struggle for a true Christian witness in a communist context. [I will present these views more precisely later.] Personally, I find that their struggle for a true Christian witness is still effective today.

Finally, as regards terminologies in this study, communism and Marxism, communist, Marxist and socialist are interchangeable respectively. It is because sometimes, Hromadka and Lochman referred to these different terms with the same meaning in their writings.

CHAPTER ONE

JOSEF.L.HROMADKA: HIS THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS

A. Hromadka's Understanding of Communism

1. HIS EARLY EXPERIENCE

Hromadka's clear and positive attitude towards communism put him in a very controversial position. In addition, the neurotic anxiety towards communism of the West, caused by the Cold War, further widened the gap of mutual understanding between Hromadka and his critics. Some accused him of "[having] led Czech Protestantism to moral disintegration, spiritual and political slough"¹, while others appreciated his courage in facing communism. But what made Hromadka hold a positive attitude towards communism? Was his attitude a naive and ignorant response? In order to understand Hromadka's view, it is important to pay attention to his early life and experience, which had already paved the way to a more sympathetic attitude towards communism.

In his autobiography, Hromadka described his life as "closely bound up with the rural peasant."² He came from a peasant family and his father was one of the respected peasants in his village. Being a peasant at that time was hard. According to F.Kavka,

the peasants, who made up four-fifths of the total number of small landowners, held only 12% of the land and the remainder belonged to the big estates of the nobles.³

Also a large number of peasants were forced to work for the landlords and were treated extremely badly. Besides his experience of the

1. J.L.Hromadka, "The Situation in Czechoslovakia." In: *The World Year Book of Religion*, Vol. 2, ed. Donald R.Cutler (London:Evans Bros, 1970), p.44.
2. J.L.Hromadka, *Thoughts of a Czech Pastor*, trans. Monika and Benjamin Page (London:SCM, 1970), p.5.
3. Frantisek Kavka, *An Outline of Czechoslovakia History* (Prague:Orbis, 1960), p.92.

peasants' life, Hromadka also had much involvement and a deep interest in the labour movement. Due to the highly-developed industrialization of Czechoslovakia since the 1890s, about three-quarters of the working population worked in factories during the 1900s. He said that he was a strong supporter of the social and socialist struggles of the working class.⁴ Hromadka's background and early experiences influenced his attitude towards communism in at least two ways. Firstly, his understanding of the exploitation and deprivation of the lower classes was not theoretical but based on concrete and solid experience. This helped him to understand communism as an attempt to explain and remove social injustice rather than as an "anti-Christian-oriented" ideology. Secondly, because of his experience with the peasants and involvement in the labour movement, he leaned towards a government which took care of the economic and social needs of the people rather than a government which only preserved political rights. Or it could be put in this way, humanity [solidarity with the poor] was Hromadka's point of departure in understanding communism [an heir of the age-long yearning for social justice and equality] and interpreting theology [the theology of incarnation].

Intellectually, Hromadka acknowledged that he was in debt to Thomas G. Masaryk and Ernst Troeltsch who widened his awareness of the political and social issues. In his book *"Doom and Resurrection"*, Hromadka devoted a chapter to the thoughts of Masaryk. One can easily detect a link between the thinking of Masaryk and Hromadka. Firstly, even though they held different views on Marxism, both of them paid much attention to the social analysis of Marxism. Secondly, Masaryk in his book *"Suicide"* diagnosed the crisis in Europe, a view inherited by Hromadka in his analysis of the present world- the crisis

4. *Thoughts of a Czech Pastor*, p.5.

of civilization. Thirdly, both of them had a strong interest in Russian revolutionary literature because such literature reflected their passion about mankind. Fourthly, Hromadka learned from Masaryk that philosophy was no aristocratic, exclusivist and high-brow concern for academic hermits, but a concrete, carefully thought out and critically tested directive for action. After the February event in 1948, Hromadka wrote:

My present position was prepared by a long study of T.J.Masaryk's profound analysis of the moral, spiritual, and social decay of what we call the modern man and the liberal capitalistic society. His understanding of the present times as a great world revolution has helped me to approach the social and economic unrest without fear and anxiety.⁵

Despite the fact that Hromadka was deeply influenced by Masaryk, this did not mean that he agreed with Masaryk's thoughts unreservedly. At least, he found that Masaryk leaned too much on his own understanding of human effort and also failed to draw a distinct line between theology and philosophy.⁶

Ernst Troeltsch was another influence on the formation of Hromadka's social awareness. Even though Hromadka criticized him strongly on the grounds that he took the laws of historical and social evolution so far that the importance of "Truth" was eliminated from his thinking, he still insisted that

Troeltsch helped the young theologian to look at the history of the church from a new vantage point, and to understand the problems of modern Christianity in the light of the social and political upheavals of the time.⁷

This was the reason why Hromadka often saw Christianity in close relationship with historical development and why he frequently urged the Church "to take history seriously."

5. J.L.Hromadka, "Between Yesterday and Tomorrow." In: *Theology Today*, Vol.5 (1948), p.276.
6. Bohuslav Pospisil, "A Forward-Looking Witness." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.2 (1959), p.252.
7. *Thoughts of a Czech Pastor*, p.13.

A final factor in Hromadka's intellectual development was the influence of Russia. He read a lot of Russian literature. In "*Doom and Resurrection*" he devoted a chapter to Dostoevski. Hromadka noted that Russian literature reflected a strong sense of social responsibility and a great compassion for the poor and deprived. The Russian authors penetrated the deepest depths and innermost cry of the people. Nicolas Berdyaev also shared his view, saying that

[Russian literature] seeks truth and righteousness, and teaches the bringing of truth into actual life. Russian literature was not born of a happy creative profusion, but of suffering and the painful fate of mankind, out of the search for salvation for all men..... It evinced a sympathy with humanity which amazed the whole world.⁸

This drew Hromadka, holding a rather different perspective on the Soviet Russian communism, because he believed it to be linked with this tradition. Furthermore, Hromadka served as a military chaplain on the eastern border of Austria toward the end of the First World War. He met people coming back from Russia bringing news of the October Revolution and this impressed him profoundly. It led to his belief that the October Revolution was not, as the West viewed it, the continuity of totalitarianism but rather a beginning of the recovery of humanity.

All these factors paved the way for Hromadka's positive attitude to communism. But they alone did not determine it. What other factors contributed?

8. Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Origin of Russian Communism*, trans. R.M.French (London:Geoffrey Bles, 1955), pp.76-77.

2. HIS INTERPRETATION OF THE PRESENT WORLD

The crisis of civilization was Hromadka's point of departure in understanding the issues of his era. In 1944, Hromadka had already described that

man has lost all sense of the Truth; the human soul has become confused as to what is the ultimate authority to which we owe unqualified allegiance; the Church has forgotten her identity, and her ministers have prostituted their calling through a primary occupation with the irrelevant, secondary, and tertiary issues of life; the modern mind has obscured the line between God and the world, between justice and injustice, between eternity and time- we have not realized the subterranean crumbling and breaking of the pillars on which our norms and standards rested.¹

In 1948 after the February event, he stressed once again that

the whole of the civilized human race is sick, and none is justified in claiming a monopoly of means and medicines for the cure of the disintegrated international order. We are living in a crisis that is more than a crisis of democracy and freedom, of liberalism or humanism. What is at stake is much more than modern civilization and free society. The ultimate principles and axioms of truth, justice, human personality, love and the organic moral fellowship of men are at stake. Modern man, both in the West and in the East, has lost a real understanding of the supreme authority and the supreme court of appeal to which all men, all nations and races, ought to subordinate themselves in order to understand one another and to discover a common ground on which to start the construction of a new and better order.²

Hromadka considered that the causes leading to the present crisis were as follows: Firstly, the Church, especially from the 18th century onwards, had failed to listen to the needs of people. It had failed to protect its flocks from moral confusion, economic exploitation and social injustice. It was bureaucratic and corrupt, and had lost the confidence of the people because it associated itself with the privileged classes. The Church eventually became an institution to justify an unjust and exploited society. Secondly, Hromadka

1. J.L.Hromadka, *Doom and Resurrection* (Richmond:Madras, 1944), pp.117-118.

2. J.L.Hromadka, "Church Responsibility in Our Divided World." In: *The Church and International Disorder* (London:SCM, 1948), p.116.

maintained that secularization was well advanced in Europe. He wrote that

all the great thinkers and authors since the 18th century had dealt very little with God and had again and again led man closer to the border between belief and disbelief. Even the "God" of Hegel and the "Christ" of Tolstoi reflected the titanic attempt of the modern world to possess God and to become his Lord.³

He lamented that the whole of the civilized human race was sick because man had lost interest in "Truth", accepted material life as the only concern and reality and had failed to concern himself with the needs of the poor. Man had become morally lax, cynical and skeptical. Then he posed a question: Who could provide a purpose for mankind to fight for?

In "*Communism and the Theologians*" Charles West animadverted that the crisis of civilization identified by Hromadka was only his personal response to circumstances rather than the result of social analysis. It is undeniable that Hromadka's understanding is not a social analysis; but it should not be forgotten that Hromadka's view is shared by other contemporary theologians. For instance, D.Bonhoeffer in the early 1940s had already pointed out that humanity's coming of age was independent of Nature, and the protection of Man from Nature's menace was accomplished through organization. But because of the lack of spiritual power, he argued: What protected mankind from the menace of organisation? Furthermore, he said that in the age of religionlessness of man, God as a working hypothesis and a stop-gap of man's embarrassment had become superfluous.⁴ W.A.Visser't Hooft, in his book "*The Wretchedness and Greatness of the Church*", indicated that God had become only a private and individual concern.

3. J.L.Hromadka, "Gospel for Atheist". In: *Risk*, Vol.1, No.1 (1965), p.33.

4. John De Gruchy, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (London:Collins, 1988), p.273.

People placed less hope in the eternal survival of the soul, and emphasized the earthly nature of mankind himself. He commented that

the vacuum, the great spiritual void of the masses had become more and more intolerable. The Church does very little to fill it..... God depends upon the life of people on this earth. People on this earth were in themselves an end, while God was but a means.⁵

In view of these, Hromadka's response was not purely a subjective observation.

Facing the crisis of civilization, Hromadka was in doubt as to whether the Democratic West could provide a ground for the people to meet it. Firstly, he questioned whether the Democratic West could maintain peace. He felt disappointed that the two World Wars had been started by the so called "*Christian*" nations. On the one hand, they had failed to control German nationalism. On the other hand, they did not understand the meaning of the Russian October Revolution, regarding it as an outburst of Russian nationalism or a change to another form of totalitarian regime. Because of their naivety and ignorance of Soviet Russia, a moral and political vacuum developed which allowed the rise of Fascism and the National-Socialist Movement. More importantly, the Munich Incident in 1938 prompted a total change in Hromadka's attitude towards the Democratic West. He wrote:

For the nations of Central Europe the days of Munich were a turning point of history; I repeat: of history..... Our people, after 1938, know that they cannot rely on Western nations, that they have to rely more than ever on the East [Soviet Russia].⁶

J.Smolik, one of his students, also noted that

[because] of the intense shock of the betrayal of Czechoslovakia by the Western Powers at Munich, Hromadka's positive evaluation of Christian civilization underwent a

5. W.A.Visser't Hooft, *The Wretchedness and the Greatness of the Church* (London:Macmillan, 1944), p.22-23.
6. J.L.Hromadka, *Theology Between Yesterday and Tomorrow* (Philadelphia:Westminister, 1957), p.52.

profound change. For him, Munich marked the end of the idea of Christian civilization.⁷

Due to his open and strongly critical attitude towards Nazism in Czechoslovakia, Hromadka lived as an exile in the United States from 1939 to 1947. At the beginning of his American sojourn, he still believed that

the New World beyond the Atlantic rose in our minds and hearts as the last and unshakable stronghold of human decency, civil freedom, and good will..... After the frightful collapse of democratic Europe, it was America that remained the only hope of all freedom-loving men. Our expectations were not disappointed.⁸

But after staying some years in the United States, he became disillusioned by the American civil rights movement. He recognized that this was purely a civil rights struggle by those who already had economic power but were illegitimately deprived of their political rights, that is, by the black bourgeoisie. In addition, he was disenchanted by American isolationism, pacificism, indifference to definite convictions and spiritual fatigue.⁹ All these caused him to wonder whether the United States could claim to make the world "safe" by democracy.

Secondly, the Democratic West failed to achieve real social justice. Hromadka's critique was of the bourgeois society in which the open and anonymous power of money could cleverly and quite honestly blind the democracy of these countries to ruthless exploitation and politico-economic domination over weaker countries, that is, colonialism and imperialism. He questioned,

"Is not a material, economic interest on the part of big industries and financial concerns looming behind all high-

7. J.Smolik, *The Fourth Man and The Gospel* (Geneva:WSCF, 1971), p.106.
8. M.Spinka, *Church in Communist Society* (Hartford:Conn, 1954), p.22.
It quoted from "The American-Czechoslovak Fellowship" (Chicago, 1942), I, i, 8.
9. *Doom and Resurrection*, pp.80-81.

sounding slogans of a free democracy, behind all efforts to protect individual freedom, free enterprise against any control by government, society and state?"¹⁰

How, he argued, could such a government establish and maintain a just society? They were controlled by the rich, and only made the rich richer. Despite the different solutions of Hromadka and R.Niebuhr, Reinhold Niebuhr shared Hromadka's criticism on the Democratic West. Niebuhr acknowledged that the Democratic West gave way to the exploitation of the working class and the backward countries, and that the capitalists refused to transfer their economic power to other classes which was an essential requirement for any transformation.¹¹ Hromadka insisted resolutely that the political institutions of democracy had to be completed by the economic and social liberation of Man.

Thirdly, Hromadka criticized the Democratic West for only wanting to preserve their existing privileges and values and being reluctant to change. They held a negative attitude towards Soviet Russia due to anti-communist propaganda. They were proud of their respect for and protection of freedom. But Hromadka commented that

the danger of the democratic world lies in a skeptical attitude to life and in a cynical desire for mere entertainment and comfort, more fun and good times. A skeptical mood undermines, imperceptibly, the organic cohesion of social life, creates spiritual chaos, moral anarchy and prepares the advance of tyranny against its own will and expectations.¹²

He questioned how such a lifestyle could meet the present crisis. Hromadka lamented how far the Western democracies morally,

10. "Christian Responsibility in Our Divided World." In: *The Church and International Order*, p.122.

11. Charles West, *Communism and the Theologians* (London: SCM, 1958), pp.126-129.

12. J.L.Hromadka, "One Year Later." In: *Theology Today*, Vol.4 (1947), p.41-42.

intellectually and spiritually were capable and competent to deal with the basic needs of our era.¹³

Here, it is important to be aware of two things. Firstly, even though Hromadka was so against and disappointed by liberal democracy, he did not believe that communism would replace democracy or that liberal democracy would die out one day. What he meant was that the Democratic West would lose its leading position of the world but would need to share with others the solving of contemporary problems. Secondly, it is important to distinguish between Hromadka's understanding of democracy and the Democratic West. Hromadka appreciated democracy. He wrote:

We are concerned with democracy in its moral, spiritual, human and cultural depths, in its freedom, justice, personal responsibility and cultural creativeness.¹⁴

Thus, the democratic system which he attacked was characterised by a capitalistic-oriented form of government. It was controlled by the capitalists and failed to work out equality in economic terms. It was only a middle-class ideology that the economic class who wanted political power commensurate with their economic power.

So, was the Democratic West which Hromadka criticized evil and/or weak? On the one hand, the Democratic West was weak, because the western idea of freedom, liberty and democracy was too formal, too unrelated to the basic issues and realities of the period after the War. Hromadka considered that a formal democratic process was not an end in itself. The masses of common men were interested in the goal and the purpose to which human freedom and free institutions ought to be dedicated. On the other hand, the Democratic West was evil because

13. "Christian Responsibility in Our Divided World." In: *The Church and International Order*, p.123.

14. "The Situation in Czechoslovakia." In: *The World Year Book of Religion*, Vol.2, p.60.

it was abused by the rich, who adopted a self-righteous outlook to hide their exploitation. Besides, the Democratic West did not provide any useful method to curb the unceasing exploitation by the capitalists. Hromadka believed that democracy could only function in normal times on the grounds of universally accepted and agreed principles, but he found that this was not the situation in Asia, Africa and even in eastern Europe after the War. He considered that the moral and spiritual unity of the West as well as its political and cultural unity had been shaken. The great dominating ideas of the bourgeois era which were new and dynamic a century ago had become dead and powerless. Did that mean the other alternative which provided a ground for mankind to meet the crisis of civilization should be communism?

3. CHRISTIANITY AND COMMUNISM

Hromadka risked taking sides with communism because of the urgent crisis of civilization in his era and his disappointment in the Democratic West. Already in 1920, Hromadka was open to communism. He noted that

it is possible to criticize bolshevism quite sharply. But it is important from which point of view you criticize bolshevism and all political currents in general. If religion, then religion, if Christianity, then Christianity. You think that your criticism is religious, but in reality your point of view is purely middle class. You think that you propagate the Gospel of Christ, but in reality your criticisms are determined by fears about all possible things, only not about Christ.¹

In 1944, Hromadka also wrote:

The Marxist attitude to all human problems is the attitude of a positivist; for all moral, cultural, spiritual difficulties and diseases, there is only one remedy, one medicine: to improve, to transform social and economic conditions.²

It is clear that his later positive attitude to Marxism is not the response of an opportunist.

Principally, Hromadka considered that Marxism was one of the expressions of an age-long struggle against social exploitation and inequality. It was not the result of anti-religious feelings or merely a political revolution, rather was the result of the failure of the Church to respond to the social injustice and of exploitation by the ruling class. From the 18th century onwards, the Industrial Revolution occurred first in Great Britain, and, with the development of technology, many people in Europe worked in factories. But they were treated badly. In addition, industrialists moved into the

1. J.L.Hromadka, "From the Works of J.L.Hromadka." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.II (1959), p.108.
It quoted from "Radicalism of the Gospel." In: *Kostnické Jiskry* on November 25th 1920.
2. J.L.Hromadka, *Doom and Resurrection* (Richmond:Madras, 1944), p.66.

colonies and exploited the labour there. Facing this social injustice and oppression, the Church failed to be impressed with the suffering of the poor, and even allied itself with the respectable ethics of that time, backing the status quo against any rebellion. During that time, Hromadka noted that there was no institution which could understand the workers' situation and stand for their rights, except "communism, with its understanding of the material and spiritual needs of the lowest strata of the people and with its opposition to exploitation of any kind, [which] had shown more creative power than other political systems."³ The communists did not look like the West which only had an interest in the bourgeois-capitalist class. Accordingly, the communists were worthy of support and encouragement. With regard to the expansion of communism in Asia and Africa, Hromadka did not consider it as another form of imperialism by Soviet Russia, but he explained that communism attracted the inhabitants because of its principles in helping human society from the bottom through economic and social liberation of the lowest and poorest strata of peasants and workers.

Marx's teaching on collective planning and a more equal distribution of wealth which would safeguard human dignity and world security attracted Hromadka very much. Hromadka did not believe the bourgeois ideology of economics which suggested that in economic life follow up man's personal interest and this would promote the economic development of the whole, it would be good for the community, the nation and the state. On the other hand, due to the great catastrophe of the two World Wars in political, economic and moral terms, mankind needed something to work for, and communism could provide what was needed at that particular historical moment. That meant that

3. J.L.Hromadka, *The Church and Theology in Today's Trouble Times* (Prague:Ecumenical Council of Churches, 1956), p.48.

reconstruction demanded first of all an integrating principle, and an order which incorporated the will of the people for social justice and liberation. In 1948, Hromadka addressed the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, saying:

Many people had come to realize that what really mattered was not primarily political freedom, but a well-thought out, reliable plan for a new society based on social justice, human dignity, enduring peace..... There are peoples whose situation may be compared to a flood inundating and destroying villages and towns, to a fire sweeping across a city..... In certain circumstances, discipline, service, responsibility, self control, self dedication are superior to freedom and human rights.⁴

Furthermore, the communists were a hard working and disciplined people. The communists and the radical socialists knew what they wanted and what was to be done. They were willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the people. Hromadka appreciated this attitude and claimed that this could not be found in the West which favoured self-interest and the preserving of old values. Even though he appreciated communism and communists very much, he never believed that communism held the truth for mankind. He repeated frequently that

no social and political order can bring about salvation and perfect freedom for humanity. We very well know that the most adequate social organizations, legal and political, are in a position to provide nothing more than a framework for the real, genuine human life in love, compassion, truth and hope.⁵

A sense of the guilt of Christianity, the ideal of communism, and the relationship between communism and Russian revolutionary literature represented by Dostoevski led Hromadka to be convinced that in

the final analysis, communist theory and practice is not meant to be an end in itself, but that in essence this theory and practice is designed for man, for the increase of

4. David P.Gaines, *The World Council of Churches* (Peterborough: Richard R.Smith, 1966), p.255.

5. J.L.Hromadka, "The Present Age and the Crisis of Christian Civilization." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.I (1958), p.94.

justice and equality and thereby the deepening and elevating of human dignity and freedom also.⁶

Like Karl Barth, Hromadka made a very clear distinction between Nazism and Marxism. For Hromadka, it was admittedly the case that the Nazi movement was considered as a new kind of revelatory divine action that reversed the apostolic conception of the unity of Jews and gentiles. The Church should undoubtedly oppose and struggle against the religious, moral, national and international dangers of Nazism. But Marxism itself, Hromadka argued, neither adhered to any metaphysic that would elevate an earthly reality to the plane of an Absolute nor made the slightest attempt to re-interpret or to falsify or to shroud itself in a Christian garment. It was only a response to the misery and frustration of the suffering people, and to the self-righteous attitude of the Church and of the so-called "Christian" nations. It was more or less a "*secularized Christian theology*". Thus, Hromadka urged that the Church should not be against Marxism as it was against Nazism but rather should join its work in the reconstruction of society, "not because of any philosophy of history, but because of the prophetic and apostolic message [which] unveiled before our eyes the terrific picture of our guilt, of our sins, of commission and omission."⁷ Marxist humanism was Hromadka's starting point in his assessment. Under the era of rigid Stalinism, did Hromadka already know something about the Early Marx?⁸ In his address delivered to the

6. *Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia*, 1956, p.50. It quoted from Hromadka's book "*Von der Reformation zum Morgen.*"
7. J.L.Hromadka, "The Crisis of the Ecumenical Fellowship." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.I (1958), p.24.
8. The Early Marx meant the Paris Manuscripts written during Marx's exile in Paris. Until 1927, a complete edition of Marx's early writings was produced under the supervision of the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow. But this superb edition was discontinued in 1933 mainly for political reason. Until Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalinism in 1956, the humanist attitudes of the Early Marx played a highly significant role in opposing Stalinist interpretation of Marxism. In 1961, it published in Czech. Details can be seen in D.McLellan, "*Marx Before Marxism*" and J.M.Lochman, "*Encountering Marx*", pp.47-75.

First Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948 concerning communism, Hromadka did not refer to any concepts, like "alienation", "labour" or "fetishism" which were so significant in the Early Marx. But interestingly, he discussed communism in the context of Soviet Russia. On the one hand, he considered that the philosophy of communism and the Soviet system were not identical. On the other hand, he believed that the Soviet Revolution was a product of the spirit of the Russian revolutionary tradition, that is, its social passion, warm love and self-sacrificing sympathy for the exploited. Thus, shedding light from the Russian revolutionary tradition, Hromadka understood Marxism in a rather humanist way; or it can be put in this way that he touched the essence of the Early Marx.

Even though Marxist social analysis was regarded as an important instrument to examine social conditions, Hromadka did not accept it unreservedly. Concerning the philosophy of materialism, Hromadka criticized it severely saying that man could not be understood in material terms only. But this did not lead him to reject Marxism completely. In contrast, he explained that it was only a

more formal, philosophical, revolting against the official *Weltanschauung* of the feudal and bourgeois society [e.g. dialectical materialism], and the other, more material [in its very essence idealistic], struggling for a social system in which all the class differences would fade away..... and all men and women would be united on the same ground of human dignity, freedom, and love.⁹

Its materialism was against the idealistic philosophy characterized by the Church at that time; that is, it just talked about the Other World and failed to concern itself with the present distress of the people. Accordingly, materialism was not a purely materialistic product, but rather a challenge to the Church and governments to meet the material

9. J.L.Hromadka, "Christian Responsibility in Our Divided World." In: *The Church and International Disorder* (London:SCM, 1948), p.129.

needs of the people. Besides, it could also help man to avoid the material obstacles to human dignity and human freedom because man did not need to feel anxious for his material needs anymore. Nevertheless, Hromadka insisted firmly that

dialectical materialism helps us to a certain degree, but it does not help in understanding man to the depths and heights of his soul, in his meanness and nobility; it does not give us the key which actually opens the door to a real understanding of the past and present.....¹⁰

Class struggle in Marxism was employed to describe the process of dialectical materialism; it could help society going forwards to the classless society. It was a struggle between those who controlled the means of production and those did not, an antagonism originating in the exploitation of the working class. Hromadka realized that Marx might have underestimated other motives of the historical process, but he identified himself with Marx in that

the class struggle is not just a propaganda slogan or a cheap call to action. It embraces the most serious of human problems: The fight against poverty and hunger, against the humiliation and exploitation of men and nations. This is an extremely complex question which concerns not just the forms of political freedom, but genuine human equality and dignity.¹¹

Thus, he claimed that class struggle was neither invented nor encouraged by Marx, but rather was an unavoidable phenomenon of the present exploited world.

10. Milan Opocensky, *Christian and Revolution* (Geneva:WCC, 1977), p.61.

It quoted from "Kommunismus a Krestanstvi" by J.L.Hromadka, *Hradec Kalove*, 1946, p.40.

It is interesting that M.Spinka in his book "*Church in Communist Society*" also quoted from the same article but in page 47, saying "Marxism sufficed to explain the world, but not transform it." Spinka commented Hromadka holding a contradictory view at the same time. Even though I cannot find the original source, it seems to me that Hromadka never held "Marxism sufficed to explain the world" in all his other writings. Perhaps, what "the world" meant in that context which Spinka did not point out.

11. J.L.Hromadka, *Thoughts of a Czech Pastor*, trans. Monika and Benjamin Page (London:SCM, 1970), pp.28-29.

Regarding revolution, Marx wrote: "A violent revolution is doubly necessary, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to form society anew."¹² Revolution was not only a change in the appearance of the society or a change of government, but also the transformation of a system and its social and political relationships. In response to this, Hromadka said that no revolution could be a blessing. But the revolutionary message of the prophets of Israel and of the Gospel was a hidden impulse for social progress even where the revolutionaries themselves proclaimed non-religious and sometimes atheistic slogans. A real revolution was its concern for man and for a more just social and human order.¹³ Hromadka considered that a great danger arose for the Church and for society whenever there was an attempt to suppress a revolution in the name of the Christian faith or even in Christ's name. For instance, Luther's fateful decision in 1525, when the nascent Church of the Reformation could find no words of encouragement and comfort for the oppressed and suffering German peasants. For Hromadka, it marked the beginning of a dangerous individualization and a retreat into privacy where the Gospel seemed to lose its revolutionary, creative influence in public life.¹⁴ He wrote:

If it is true as I have said, that the heart of communism and its essential aims cannot be understood outside the context of the Christian tradition, then we may claim that the finest aspects of the communist revolution and its accomplishments cannot be maintained without Christianity.¹⁵

12. John Elster, *An introduction to Karl Marx* (New York:Cambridge, 1986), p.164.
13. Hans Ruh, *Geschichte und Theologie: Grundlinien der Theologie Hromadkas* (Zurich:Evz, 1963), pp.34-35.
14. Milan Opocensky, *Christian and Revolution* (Geneva:WCC, 1977), p.62.
It quoted from J.L.Hromadka, "Der Christ Imitten der Weltrevolution", p.60f.
15. Ibid., p.63.
It quoted from J.L.Hromadka, "Komunismus a krestanstvi", p.42.

Regarding the question of violence, he did not define his views. But he did not assume that the well-fed, the rich and the strong would have compassion for the suffering of the weak.¹⁶ Hromadka claimed that "he had no theology of revolution, but he had a theology for revolution."¹⁷ On the one hand, Hromadka urged Marxists to re-examine and re-consider the ways in which revolution was carried out. On the other hand, he felt that Christians should not be ashamed of supporting revolution because it was a must in the development of humanity.

According to Marx, class struggle and continuous revolutions would lead to a classless society, the communist state where there would be no more exploitation and alienation, and human life would be lived in justice, trust and dignity. In 1947, Hromadka had realized that one of the two dangers of the world political structure was that it rested in the identification of the ultimate authority and truth with a visible, tangible, socio-political system or with a visible religious office and institution.¹⁸ Even though his critique was not specific, it could be understood. In 1948, Hromadka said definitely that the Marxist theory of the state and of a perfect classless society was false because it assumed its redeeming power of solving all human moral, economic, political and international problems. But it did not lead him to have the same conclusion as Reinhold Niebuhr who totally rejected any sort of utopianism. The idea of a classless society did not contradict any basic motive of the Biblical message,

16. The position of the Christian Peace Conference of use of violent in revolution can be regarded as a reflection of Hromadka's position. See J.M.Lochman, "Ecumenical Theology of Revolution." In: *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol.21 (1968), pp.170-177.

17. Paul Lehmann, "Christian Theology in a World in Revolution." In: *Openings for Marxist-Christian Dialogue*, ed. Thomas W.Ogletree (New York:Abingdon, 1969), p.99.

18. J.L.Hromadka, "One Year Later." In: *Theology Today*, Vol.4 (1947), p.42.

just as the ideal of a humanistic democracy might be regarded as a political, secularised expression of Biblical heritage. Thus, Hromadka concluded:

There is no question about the fact that the Christian hope, based on the gospel of Christ, finds itself on a higher level than any secular hope. A Christian believer has legitimate and unqualified objections to any effort to elevate secular hopes to the level of what we call eschatological expectations of the new heaven and the new earth. But the very desire for a society without social classes, differences, and tensions is justifiable, indeed, higher than a purely political concept of free society.¹⁹

In relation to religion, the Marxists' understanding could be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, what was its religious attitude? Was its atheism a substantial and integral part of it? Secondly, did Marxism become a religion in itself? Concerning the first question, Marx wrote:

Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless circumstances. It is the opium of the people.

In that historical context, it was not that religion was the poison of the people, or should be eliminated at once, but that states used religion to dull the demands of the people for their just economic and social rights.²⁰ That was what the Church, especially in the 19th century, did to provide a transcendental hope and so cause the people to ignore the real reasons for their misery, refraining them from doing things that might have improved their lot. In this historical background, however, in the mid 1950s, Hromadka urged Christians to realize the meaning of Marxist atheism as

radical humanism.... not what we call negative godlessness, but an effort to free man and human society of anything that has crippled his understanding and his capacity to master the laws of nature, society, and history.... We [Christians] have to understand that the atheism of dialectical materialism is a positive struggle for man, for his adequate

19. J.L.Hromadka, *Theology Between Yesterday and Tomorrow* (Philadelphia:Westminster, 1957), p.77.

20. A full discussion on "Is atheism essential to Marxism?" can be found in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol.22 (1985), No.3, pp.435-591.

self-understanding, for a better order of social and political life, for a construction of a society in which all the class differences will gradually fade away. The dynamic force of this kind of atheism is not the negation of the gods, idols, pagan cults, and religious dreams rejected and condemned by the prophets and by Jesus Christ himself. We Christians are responsible for much misunderstanding. And we have to help the communists to understand more constructively, and to free themselves from a purely negative, shallow, anti-religious propaganda. If a Christian grasps the meaning of Marxistic humanism, and if a communist penetrates beyond all religious myths and superstitions to the depth of the prophetic struggle for the real God against gods and ideals [sic], then both of them may establish a firm base of a fertile, creative controversy.²¹

In Hromadka's mind, Marxist atheism was only a question of radical humanism and its atheism was bounded by its historical condition. Marxist atheism should not be taken seriously, rather its motive for atheism. Nowadays, Hromadka's understanding of Marxist atheism may be nothing new. But if we take his understanding in his historical context- the era of Stalinism, and the Cold War, we cannot simply deny his pioneer and prophetic role. His constructive understanding of the Marxist view of religion was a major breakthrough of the antagonistic relationship between Christians and Marxists [to be discussed later]. Secondly, was a Marxist state also an atheist state? For Hromadka, the atheist state or the Christian state meant nothing because the Gospel did not identify itself with any political ideology. Moreover, atheism was never a threat or danger to Christian faith. More importantly, he believed that the dividing line was not running between atheists and Christians, or communists and non-communists, but running between the Lord of History and human sinners.

The second issue was whether Marxism is a kind of religion in itself. Hromadka strongly argued that Marxism is not a religion because it does not have any interest in God or metaphysics. Even though it talks about the classless society, this has nothing to do

21. Ibid., pp.83-84.

with the metaphysical world. It pays attention to the earthly situation of human beings and only interprets the world as being in the process of history which is reflected in its historical materialism. Marxists are more agnostic than positively transcendental. Their interest is to free men from economic exploitation and to live a good life. They are more anthropological, or empirical, and their interest covers man but not God. In spite of this, some criticized Hromadka, saying that he had no discernment for the absolutizing of ideology, and that he failed to recognize that the ideology was a faith and therefore in Christian terms- idolatry. How, then did those people who criticized Hromadka understand religion?

According to the definition of the "*Encyclopedia of Religion*", religions share the following features. They have traditionism, myth and symbol; concepts of salvation, sacred places and objects; sacred actions, sacred writings, a sacred community and sacred experience. This definition of religion sees it as a sociological phenomenon. It does not take account of revelation, incarnation and the existence of God. Paul Tillich held that "man is religious when he is ultimately concerned and on the basis of this concern makes an unconditional commitment."²² Tillich's definition can provide a ground for encounter with other faiths and ideologies. But its weakness is to allow almost any forms of totalitarian rule and all kind of "ism" as forms of religion. Alan Scarfe- a conservative Christian- in his book "*Christianity and Marxism*" employed Ninian Smart's interpretation of religion to justify his view that Marxism is more or less a religion.²³ Smart's definition is a purely sociological

22. William Horden, *Christianity, Communism and History* (London: Lutterworth, 1957), p.15.

23. Alan Scarfe ed., *Christianity and Marxism* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1982), pp.6-7.

Ninian Smart was a lecturer of Lancaster University.

a. Doctrinal: Most religions have official teaching or doctrines.

interpretation of religion. Scarfe's effort, too, seems inadequate, since he employs Smart's interpretation for his purpose of placing Marxism in the religious category without taking consideration of what assumption is behind it. I think that the above definitions are not enough to define what religion is. They have missed a very important element in their definitions; that is, *transcendence*. It is undeniable that Marxism has shared a certain number of the elements of religion [sociological definition], but it can also be found that there are a lot of such elements missing in Marxism. For instance, Marxism only talks about the future of the classless society but never deals with the death of those who fought for it.

The "*New Encyclopedia Britannica*" argues that Marxism is a quasi-religion as follows: Firstly, "Marx called from his followers a devotion and a commitment that in their empirical character greatly resemble the commitment and devotion that characterize religious people"; secondly, "Marxism had connections with the metaphysics of Hegel who interpreted reality in terms of a spiritual Absolute"; thirdly, "the thinking of Marx had religious overtones, whether from his own Jewish background or from a Christian atmosphere, not least in Britain where he lived from 1849-1883."²⁴ Besides, Reinhold Niebuhr argued that communism was not a "*high*" religion because it understood all things only at the earthly level. Their arguments appear to be an

- b. Mythological: Religions express their beliefs in story form, sometimes historical events, sometimes, fictional or parable stories with symbolic meaning.
- c. Ethical: Religions prescribe principles and sometimes codes of moral conduct, related to a. and b.
- d. Experiential: Religious faith is founded upon, and sustained by, intuitive insight, as, for example, the conversion of Paul, leading to fundamental change.
- e. Social: Religion requires the association of fellow believers in groups for its expansion and perpetration.

24. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol.15, p.598.

other way of putting Marxism into the religious category without saying that Marxism is a religion itself. D.McLellan rightly comments that

this sort of judgment is often coloured by political or religious prejudice: the ecclesiastically minded present Marxism as an ersatz-religion attempting to usurp the place of true religion: the anti-ecclesiastical wish to place Marxism in the same category as religion, which is seen as irrational, based on myth, and the enemy of civilized progress.²⁵

Hromadka accepted communism but not without criticism. At least, he realized the danger of its tendency to monopolize power and truth. Hromadka considered that communism certainly might give way to totalitarianism and the concentration of power. But this did not mean that communism was equivalent to totalitarianism as Emil Brunner considered.²⁶ Hromadka accepted totalitarian government during a national emergency time, provided that it was only for a transitional period. He had confidence that communism would change because communism was in essence neither totalitarian nor dictatorial. He was convinced by Marxist belief that the more advanced the socialist structure the less dictatorial power was needed until- in a fully developed and safeguard collectivistic, classless economy- all dictatorship will fade away.²⁷

25. David McLellan, *Marxism and Religion* (London:Macmillan, 1987), p.158.

26. Emil Brunner wrote: " This so-called communism is the logical consequence of totalitarianism.... The fully matured, the consistent totalitarian State must be communistic, since one of its essential foundations is the subjugation to the State of the whole of life and the whole of man. And the nationalization of the whole economic life of the country is the indispensable first step makes me disappointed in that towards the totalitarian State. The question which confront the Church today is therefore not whether or not it should adopt a fundamentally negative attitude towards communism, but whether it can say anything but a passionately fundamental NO to the totalitarian State which, to be consistent, must also be communistic." *Against the Stream* (London:SCM, 1954), p.109.

27. "Christian Responsibility in Our Divided World." In: *The Church and International Disorder*, p.132.

Concerning its monopoly of truth, Hromadka wrote:

The situation would admittedly be gloomy and, indeed, without hope if the Marxist communist saw in his socio-political system and in his "Weltanschauung" the only ultimate design, if a social mechanism, a planned economy, and all science and technology in the service of a monolithic and gigantic apparatus and power block were all he looked for, with no consideration for man, his dignity, freedom and well being.²⁸

But he reiterated that the struggle between Christianity and Marxism was not a struggle of ideology. Moreover, the Christian concern was not to establish and promote its ideology. Rather "[the mission of the church] was a mission of faith and obedience to the Living God. It was a mission that was equally positive and constructive in regard to the communist, and to any other human philosophical or political ideology."²⁹ More importantly, Hromadka had confidence that the Christian heritage and witness had a transforming power which would help the socialist state under construction to be free from rigidity and emptiness. He also believed that the communists would in the end come to Christians and ask for spiritual helps; that is, they cannot solve the question of man because man does not merely belong to the material world.

Hromadka considered that Marxists opened Christians' scope, on the basis of a study of the external world, its natural and economic laws, to what they should have known from the depths of their true faith.³⁰ Marxism was the unavoidable and historical necessity of its mission due to the failure of the Democratic West, and it was a judgment of God upon the failure of the Church. He urged Christians to appreciate the social and political transformation in eastern Europe and to guard a communist state against its narrow-mindedness,

28. "Gospel for Atheists." In: *Risk*, Vol.1, No.1, p.37.

29. Milan Opocensky, *The Czech Theologian J.L.Hromadka Faced with the Situation in His Country*. (Brussel:COELI, 1986), p.14.

30. J.L.Hromadka, "On the Threshold of a Dialogue." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.VIII (1964), p.139.

and absolutism because there was no limit to the service of the genuine Church. Due to his optimistic view of, predisposition to and confidence in communism, even after the Soviet invasion in 1968, Hromadka was able to maintain:

As a Christian theologian, I have nothing against socialism. Even from a religious viewpoint it is much closer to me than is bourgeois liberal democracy.³¹

31. *Thoughts of a Czech Pastor* (London:SCM, 1970), p.87.

4. THE SOVIET RUSSIAN COMMUNISM

During the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Amsterdam in 1948, Hromadka and John Foster Dulles had a great discussion on the issue of Soviet Russia. At that time, Hromadka wrote:

The strength of the Soviet system is a guarantee against the potential dangers of a new international chaos and anarchy. Who can say what the weakening or the destruction of the present Russian regime would imply? How dismal the situation of Eastern Europe and Asia, as well as that of Central and Western Europe, would become if the process of reconstruction and consolidation within the Soviet area were stopped or paralyzed!¹

Nearly 20 years later at the Ceremonial Convocation held at the Comenius Faculty in November 1967, Hromadka spoke about the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian October Revolution:

The October Revolution became a turning point not only for Russia but also for the world history. This was not immediately clear to us fifty years ago..... that October 1917 became a sort of an orientation point; with this year a new stage of history began.²

On what basis did Hromadka hold a positive attitude towards Soviet Russia? How could he convince others to accept his view?

As mentioned previously, Hromadka linked up Russian communism with the spirit of the Russian revolutionary literature. He considered that the October Revolution absorbed all the dynamic spiritual forces of Russian life; that is, Tolstoi and Dostoveski played an important role in the preparation and victory of the October Revolution through their profound understanding of the people— their poverty, suffering and helplessness. Thus, the socialist revolution of 1917 must be interpreted not only in political or economic terms,

1. J.L.Hromadka, "Christian Responsibility in Our Divided World." In: *The Church and International Disorder* (London:SCM, 1948), p.139.
2. J.L.Hromadka, "After Fifty Years." In: *Ecumenical Information from Czechoslovakia*, Supplement, 1967, p.1.

but also as a basic event of the history of humanity itself. Concerning the dictatorial regime of Soviet Russia, he explained that it was a historical necessity in a country consisting of multiple ethnicity and culturally backward elements and with a high rate of illiteracy. Historically, Russia had been under totalitarian rule for centuries. How could the people there understand democracy, Hromadka asked. In addition, the civil war in 1918-1922 within Russia, and the anti-communist propaganda by the West, had slowed down her step forwards to democracy. Nevertheless, Hromadka was convinced that dictatorship would not be the end in Soviet Russia, and eventually, she would change and transform because of improvement of literacy.

Explaining the coming of totalitarianism as a historical necessity, Hromadka was not blind to the weakness of Soviet Russia. In 1948, he strongly appealed

to the leaders of the Soviet community and of the Communist Party to rely less on the violent methods of agitation, threat, deportation, trials and police control, and to arouse in man his noblest sentiments of sympathy for the poor, the weak, the helpless and the miserable, to awaken him to what is after all the core of socialistic humanism.³

It was a warning to an anthropology which considered man exclusively as the product of his social and economic environment, similar to the way in which man in the West became a product of his society due to the free play of liberalistic forces. Despite this, he warned against confusing the philosophy of communism and the Communist Party on the one hand, and the Soviet system, on the other hand. They were not identical. Although Hromadka knew and realized how far the Soviet system was from the ideal of communism, he considered that its achievements were not cancelled out by its mistakes. For instance, the Soviet Government provided education for the people, and reduced

3. "Christian Responsibility in Our Divided World." In: *The Church and International Disorder*, pp.141-142.

the high rate of illiteracy so that the writings of Byelinski, Gogol, Tolstoy, Goncharov, Dostoevski and Gorki, which reflected compassion and a deep understanding of the miseries of people, could be read. Besides, the Soviet Government established schools, theatres, centres of culture, music halls, galleries, and museums which could develop and cultivate the spiritual sense of man which the Tsarist Government never did. All these provided a very sound ground for people to recover and rehabilitate. The victory of the Soviet Communist Government was not a misfortune but rather the result of unbearable social and political relations within European society. Hromadka claimed that this victory was no threat to modern democracies; rather a call to them to improve their social order, to nourish it and strengthen it by social reconstruction.

M.Spinka accused Hromadka of failing to realize that even though the rate of illiteracy was improved, the children were taught materialism as the ultimate truth, an atheist-oriented education. Then, what a price they had to pay for it. Hromadka did realize its danger. That was why in 1958 he opposed the Czech government's imposition of atheist-oriented education on schools. The reasons he did not criticize the Soviet Government can be understood as follows. Firstly, his action might have made the antagonistic relationship between the West and Soviet Russia more acute. Secondly, improvement of literacy might be one of the possible ways to liberate Russia from straitjacket of power, political immovability and dogmaticism. Thirdly, it was understandable that under the government censorship, it was impossible to publish any "*anti-government*" article. However, it was frequently found in Hromadka's writings showing his contradictory position. That is to say, he realized the mistakes of Soviet Russia, but kept silent about them.

With regard to the harsh religious policy of the Soviet Government, Hromadka explained that it was mainly because of the Orthodox Church's close link with the Tsarist regime and failure to adjust itself to be independent from the old social system. Due to its support for the Soviet Government during the Second World War, the Orthodox Church got appreciation from the State and finally enjoyed a certain extent of freedom given by the State in the 1940s and the early 1950s. Hromadka justified this by saying that it was the result of the Orthodox Church successfully freeing itself from dependence on a particular social system.⁴ But Hromadka's conclusion only reflected one side of the coin, and even he might intentionally disregard the political reasons behind the situation. For instance, during the era of Khrushchev, the churches were once again to face another severe attack by the State which was nothing to do with the self-righteous nature of the churches.

Concerning eastern Europe, the West usually interpreted it as a cynical subversion of democracy by Moscow and its local agents, a manifestation of the Soviet lust for world dominion. Hromadka animadverted unreservedly that it would be foolish to suspect eastern Europe's drifting to the left as a conspiracy of Soviet Russia. He commented:

The Soviet government and the communistic parties may have taken advantage of the failures of the past for their own ends. However, the easy simplification with which many people in the West have been trying to interpret the present events in the Balkans and Central Europe as a sinister Soviet or communistic expansion might fatally blind our eyes and deafen our ears to what is actually going on in those areas.⁵

4. Ibid., pp.137-138.

5. Ibid., p.123.

The whole post-war life of Europe in general, and of central and eastern Europe in particular was so fluid and abnormal that any effort to analyze it only from the perspective of a normal democratic process would prove to be inadequate and arbitrary. In the case of Czechoslovakia, due to its being betrayed in the Munich Incident and the support of Soviet Russia during the Second world War, the Communist Party got 38% of the vote in the free election of 1946. Referring to the February event of 1948, Hromadka took a rather positive, critical, sober and open approach. He considered that it was the result of the communists being the biggest party, with the best knowledge of what it wanted, an elaborated programme, well organized and prepared. After the February event, he wrote:

If you interpret the Czechoslovak crisis merely as Soviet expansion or a communist machination, ignoring the other side of the picture, namely the political helplessness and the lack of a constructive program on the part of the Czechoslovak bourgeoisie, you can hardly grasp the meaning of what happened in February.

I accept the February change as a step in the unavoidable and justifiable process of the social transformation of our life.⁶

But in his address to the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Hromadka wrote:

The Soviet system can not be transplanted into a country of a different historical, moral and cultural tradition.⁷

Was this a protest against the Soviet Government? He did not make it clear. It appeared that he agreed either the fact with that Soviet Russia had really controlled eastern Europe, including Czechoslovakia, or the fact with that Soviet Russia was beginning to penetrate her influence in eastern Europe.

Regarding the Hungarian Event in 1956, Hromadka responded to it

6. J.L.Hromadka, "Between Yesterday and Tomorrow." In: *Theology Today*, Vol.V (1948), p.271 and p.274.
7. "Christian Responsibility in Our Divided World." In: *The Church and International Disorder*, p.139.

very quickly. His standpoint was expressed in a special issue "*On the Hungarian Crisis*" in December 1956 and an article "*Further Reflection on Hungarian Crisis*" in April 1957.⁸ Summing up his arguments in these two articles, he held that at the beginning, it was the sincere desire of people in Hungary to surmount the internal shortcomings of the Hungarian society. But the West used this opportunity to prompt the hostile atmosphere. They called for the downfall of the socialist system in Hungary and created an anti-Soviet bloc. Hromadka wrote:

It was no longer a question of the struggle of the Hungarian people for freedom. The Hungarian land was the scene of horrible counter-revolutionary passion, massacre and programs, in which thousands of, not only communists, but also Jews and other citizens were killed.

The intervention of the Soviet Army was justifiable and acceptable because they saved the Hungarians from terrible bloodshed and disintegration, and furthermore a broader military conflict in Central Europe.

In Hromadka's addresses, we note: Firstly, Hromadka was right that, politically and diplomatically, the West held an anti-communist attitude. But it was a mistake to suggest that the West was solely responsible for the Cold War. Secondly, it was true that the West did not provide any military aids to Hungary, but they might be responsible for the intensification of the Hungarian atmosphere through radio propaganda. Whether or not the Hungarians asked for the abolition of the socialist system and opposed Soviet Russia, chiefly initiated by the political conspiracy of the West, was still controversial. It seemed to me that Hromadka was too quick to make a judgment, in favour of communism, without taking enough into

8. J.L.Hromadka, "On the Hungarian Crisis." In: *Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia*, Special Number, December, 1956.
J.L.Hromadka, "Further Reflection on the Hungarian Crisis." In: *Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia*, Vol.IV, No.4, April 1957, pp.34-38.

consideration the voices of the Hungarians. Thirdly, Hromadka's addresses reflected his confidence in communism and Soviet Russia. He argued that the dictatorship of the proletariat is nothing permanent. It is a temporary means for creating a new social system. But how long did the dictatorship of the proletariat last for? Did Hungarian voices imply a signal for the end of the dictatorship of the proletariat? Hromadka did not discuss it in details. Fourthly, Hromadka did not say a word about the brutality of the Soviet army in Hungary. Further, the intervention of Soviet Russia was never justifiable. Its action only revealed how deeply Hungary was a satellite of Soviet Russia. The Soviet intervention was totally against one's sovereignty. As Ans J. Van Der Bent wrote:

Although Hromadka may have been right to warn for a clerical fascism, the question remains open whether he did not exaggerate the perils of the Hungarian rebellion and was too confident of the capacity of the Soviet Union to ensure the progress of socialism.⁹

The Soviet invasion of Hungary was historically replayed on Czech soil in 1968.

On August 21, 1968, Soviet Russia with four other Warsaw Pact countries invaded Czechoslovakia, claiming that they were invited to suppress the revolution and the danger of imperialist aggression in Czechoslovakia. In his letter to the Soviet ambassador, Hromadka noted:

The love of our people will change into hatred and that our closest friends will appear as our enemy.¹⁰

He lamented that August 21, 1968 was a much darker day than March 15, 1939, on which Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia. He questioned how a

9. Ans J. Van Der Bent, "The Vital Contribution of J.L. Hromadka to the Ecumenical Movement." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol. XXXII (1989), p. 162.

10. J.L. Hromadka, "The Situation in Czechoslovakia." In: *The World Year Book of Religion*, Vol. 2, ed. Donald R. Cutler (London: Evans Bros, 1970), p. 58.

powerful state could assume the right to decide willfully, according to its own interest and conceptions, about those who were weak and did not have sufficient means for their own defence. In 1969, Hromadka resigned his post as the President of the Christian Peace Conference in protest of Dr. J.N.Ondra, General Secretary of the Christian Peace Conference, being removed from his post. Did the crisis of the Christian Peace Conference lead him to re-evaluate his attitude to Soviet Russia and communism? It is not known. But in his autobiography *"Thoughts of a Czech Pastor"* written after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Hromadka was implicitly and explicitly in doubt as to whether the two great socialist powers- China and Soviet Russia- would build a real socialist society. Besides, he emphasized once again that power was the core danger in communism. Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish between his disappointment in the Soviet Russian communism and the Czechoslovak communism. Just the opposite, he did appreciate the development of the Czechoslovak Communist Government, especially, since its denunciation of Stalinism in the early 1960s. After the Soviet invasion, Hromadka wrote:

The Communist Party [in Czechoslovakia] appeared as not only the spokesman of true socialism, but also of the longings and hopes of our entire people. A year ago only a few people would have cared what the talks of our Communist Party with the comradely Soviet Party were about. After one year, however, our Communist Party had become not only formally the leading Party but also the vital spokesman of our hearts and minds.¹¹

In October 1968, Hromadka said explicitly,

"I sided with Soviet nations even when I realized the dangers involved in their ways of thinking, in their position of power gained by blood, and in the whole structure of the communist view of the relationship between the individual and society. I was aware of the fact that the Soviet Union, under Stalin's leadership, was experiencing the serious political and moral effects of revolution, civil war, and dictatorship, as well as the general psychic exhaustion caused by the World War."¹²

11. Ibid., p.52.

12. Ibid., p.47.

It is puzzling why he still held a positive view towards Soviet Russia and why he did not criticize it. Hromadka did not give any answer to this question. It can be explained as follows. Firstly, during the Cold War, people understood the philosophy of communism in the light of the Soviet system. Any negative word could only deepen this misunderstanding. Secondly, due to his emphasis on the "YES" of the Gospel, negative criticisms only made Soviet Russia less likely to transform. Thirdly, to a certain extent, Czechoslovakia was under the control of Soviet Russia. Hromadka wrote after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia: "Our people, however, were commanded to worship the Soviet Union."¹³ A harsh word on Soviet Russia could be an obstacle for the transformation of the Czechoslovak Communist Government. Fourthly, as Josef Smolik explained that "Hromadka avoided criticizing [Soviet Russia] publicly because he did not want to risk making the Cold War more acute in the atomic era by such a step."¹⁴ Hromadka's mistake was not his support for communism nor was it an opportunist position, but the way he chose to express his goodwill; that is, to keep silent about the mistakes of communist governments in order to have a reconciliation between West and East. The price he paid was not his faith, but rather his eminence.

13. Ibid., p.49.

14. J.Smolik, "Philosophy in History." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.XII (1969), p.119.

B. His underlying theology

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF HROMADKA'S THEOLOGICAL THOUGHTS

Among the influences which helped to mould the theological thoughts of Hromadka are, firstly, his disappointment with the liberal theology and Lutheranism of that time; secondly, the new theological movement initiated by the crisis theology; thirdly, his collaboration with Emanuel Radl; fourthly, the theological heritage of the Bohemian Reformation; lastly, the revolutionary social events which he lived through.

Hromadka began his theological training in Vienna in the year 1907 because there was no Protestant Theological Institute in Prague at that time. In the German fashion, Hromadka went from university to university; from Vienna to Basle, to Heidelberg, to Aberdeen and finally back to Prague. During his study in Basle, he was influenced by the great Old Testament scholar, Bernhard Duhm. Duhm was a radical biblical critic but at the same time had a profound intuitive understanding of the prophetic message of the unconditioned sovereignty of the living God. In 1918, Hromadka published an article "*Back to the Prophets*" in which he insisted that the prophetic message of the sovereign freedom of the Lord was opposed to an easy-going consolation of conventional pietism which only knew the gracious Lord without stern obligation to follow him. Furthermore, Hromadka's emphasis on the prophetic message which was influenced by Duhm gradually matured in his theological thoughts, especially in his criticisms of the churches [which is discussed in the next section]. Besides, during his study in Heidelberg, Hromadka was under the influence of Johannes Weiss, Ernst Troeltsch and the neo-Kantian philosopher, W. Windelband who were the representatives of "*liberal*

theology" at that time. Walter M.Horton in an interview with Hromadka in the mid-1930s, noted:

Hromadka was originally a pronounced liberal himself, a pupil and a follower of Troeltsch; and when he first returned from his theological studies in Germany, feared he would be excluded from the church for his unorthodox views.¹

But Hromadka's liberal view did not persist. After being an Austrian army chaplain towards the end of the First World War, Hromadka confronted the deficiency and weakness of liberal theology. Further, in constant contact with suffering and death, he found that it could not provide any real hope and consolation for the people. He criticized liberal theology, headed by F.Schleiermacher and followed by the entire liberal school of theology up to and including E.Troeltsch, for a lack of practical piety as well as true doctrine. Liberal theologians understood God as merely a human feeling [or religious mood], and universal or normal laws. Hromadka lamented that the early twentieth century theology was inclined to replace the basic themes of biblical thinking with principles of the modern immanentist and idealistic, pantheistic world view which identified God with cosmic law and the human mind.² It marked his departure from liberal theology. According to J.B.Soucek, around 1918,

it became clear to Hromadka that the central problem of theology is the problem of God; that what matters are not religious experiences, but the absolute truth; that God is no mere principle of life, but the first starting point of any theological thinking; that it is not important what men experience, but what they are to experience.....³

This was no doubt the turning point of Hromadka's thought but his emphasis on Christology was later fully developed under the stimulation of Karl Barth.

1. W.M.Horton, *Contemporary Continental Theology* (London:SCM, 1938), p.204.
2. S.Paul Schilling, *Contemporary Continental Theologians* (London:SCM, 1966), p.62.
It quoted from "From the Works of J.L.Hromadka." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.II (1959), p.111.
3. J.B.Soucek, "Theology in Action." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.II (1959), pp.278-279.

Hromadka was ordained and became the vicar of the Moravian Lutheran Congregation of Vestin in 1916 before the formation of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren in 1918. In spite of being educated in the Lutheran tradition, he held a rather critical attitude towards Lutheranism. He was named as a "stormy-petrel" in his church and was regarded "as a renegade" by a small group of conservative Lutheran Orthodox.⁴ His major criticism of Lutheranism at that time was its inadequacy with regard to social problems, especially, its doctrine of two kingdoms. Lutheranism stressed the inner experiences of justification and reconciliation but neglected the world which was around them and the role of the Church in the world. It had little to say, theologically, on man's responsibility for freedom, justice and social humanism in the world. Hromadka was strongly in doubt how they could believe that in one sphere the reign of Christ held sway, and the other was temporal life where the law of Christ had no place and where social, economic and cultural laws were sovereign. Hromadka asserted that

the grace, fully given to [Christians] in Christ did not concern merely the so-called religious life. It was not limited to the sanctuary and the house of prayer..... a faithful Christian must regard the whole world, secular life..... in the light of the message of God's mercy, of the cross of Christ, of forgiveness and the resurrection of Christ. [Christians] could not any longer draw a sharp line between the organized church and the world.⁵

It is important to note that Hromadka's critique of Lutheranism was shaped by the situation in which he found himself. Paul Tillich referred to the historical situation at that time, saying that the problem which the churches in the West faced after the First World War was how to overcome the split between Lutheran transcendentalism and

4. M.Spinka, *Church in Communist Society* (Hartford:Conn, 1954), p.6.

5. J.L.Hromadka, *The Church and Theology in Today's Troubled Time*. (Prague:Ecumenical Council of Churches, 1956), p.9.

the secular utopianism in the socialist group.⁶ Thus, it is obvious that the type of Lutheranism on which Hromadka commented is the one characterized by transcendentalism.

Among the influences on the theological thought of Hromadka, Karl Barth might seem to be one of the most important. In his book "*Doom and Resurrection*", Hromadka devoted a chapter to introduce Karl Barth and his "*theology of crisis*". And on the 70th birthday of Barth, Hromadka sent a long letter to testify how he had been upheld by his works.⁷ Barth caught the first attention of Hromadka with his theology of crisis which appeared in the early 1920s. In brief, the major concern of the crisis or dialectical theology was in opposition to the optimistic, and man-centered theology of the 19th century [liberal theology]. It attempted to recover the Reformation doctrines of the Word of God, the sovereignty of God and the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and emphasized the crisis in which God's word met man. It introduced a dialectical method that recognized the polarity between God and man, eternity and time, life and death, sinner and forgiven, belief and unbelief. With his disappointment in liberal theology, Hromadka found that theology of crisis was remarkably parallel to his own research and he gratefully accepted many of its results. He claimed that theology of crisis met the centre point of theology; that is,

to understand the point where the vertical line of the Lord of the universe intersected the horizontal line of human life; to interpret, in a challenging, dynamic way, the inescapable crisis of the finite, mortal man encountering the present reality of the Speaking God.⁸

6. Carl E. Braaten ed., *Perspectives on 19th and 20th century Protestant Theology* (London: SCM, 1967), p.237.
7. S. Paul Schilling, p.63.
It quoted from *Antwort*, Ernst Wolf ed. (Zurich: Evangelischer, Verlag, 1956), p.13.
8. J. L. Hromadka, *Doom and Resurrection* (Richmond: Madras, 1944), p.90.

We may ask: Is Hromadka a Barthian? Firstly, although he was in agreement with the intention behind this rejection, Hromadka hardly accepted in full Barth's emphatic rejection of all natural theology. That is to say, on the one hand, Hromadka shared Barth's conviction that man could not reach God by the way of extension of his intellectual, moral or religious efforts, but rather must wait to be found and touched by the call of the living God. On the other hand, in an article "*Prirozene Nabozenstvi*" [natural theology] published in 1929⁹, Hromadka hesitated to deny in general terms any natural knowledge of God. It seemed to him that there was something healthy and vigorous in the conviction of the Reformers' teaching of natural cognition of God, that even philosophical thoughts of God could and should be integrated into the vision of Christian faith and the theological thinking. But he insisted that there existed only one truth and not two truths. Thus, on the one hand, Hromadka's thinking remained open to positive co-operation with the world and to dialogue. On the other hand, it gave way for others, such as Charles West, to criticize him here, suggesting that this was the reason why Hromadka could accept Marxism as a porch of the Church which was God's revelation and why his thought was able to take in Marxism so uncritically on its own level.¹⁰ Secondly, Barth abandoned completely the religious socialist movement but Hromadka did not. During the 1930s, Barth's action saved Protestantism from the onslaught of the neo-collectivistic and pagan Nazism. But Hromadka criticized Barth for an unilateral concentration on theology and the Church, which, especially among his disciples, could lead to some kind of scholasticism. Barth's followers seemed to him too academic and ecclesiastic to be actually able to interfere with the political scene

9. J.L.Hromadka, "Aus den Schriften von J.L.Hromadkas." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.II (1959), pp.115-116.

10. Charles West, *Communism and the Theologians* (London:SCM, 1958), p.65.

in Germany, that is, the German question after the Second World War. In contrast to Barth's "No" to historical human achievements, Hromadka's "Yes" to social and cultural progress which built up hope and confidence, and had a liberating effect. Hromadka claimed that a distrustful attitude, and a position of non-involvement, merely reinforced the temptation of self-righteous isolationism in the Church. Thirdly, both Hromadka and Barth forbore making of Christ a means of escape from the world. Barth put emphasis first on Christ and then on the world, whereas Hromadka noted that Christ was unthinkable without the world. Hromadka understood that the Word of God could be passed on only in historical categories. Besides these fundamental different emphases, the Bohemian Reformation gave a different and unique orientation to Hromadka's theology.

Before examining the importance of the Bohemian Reformation on Hromadka, it is important to pay attention to the influence of Emanuel Radl [1873-1942] on Hromadka. Radl was a Professor of Philosophy in Czech-Karl University, and worked along with Hromadka to organize the so-called *Academic Y.M.C.A.* and published the *Krestanska Revue* [The Christian Review] from 1927 to 1939.¹¹ We can find a link between the thoughts of Radl and Hromadka. For instance, in 1933, Radl wrote a book "*The German revolution*" which stated the danger of Hitler coming to power. Besides, Radl stressed the importance to have a dialogue with other disciplines. He also lamented the crisis of civilization. All these thoughts can be found a parallel in Hromadka's thought. Here, I do not suggest that Hromadka was largely influenced by him, but rather Hromadka's thought was affirmed by Radl because they were companion and worked so closely for more than ten years. That is why

11. See J.M.Lochman, "Emanuel Radl: der Philosophische Mitstreiter J.L.Hromadkas." In: *Evangelische Theologie*, 49 Jg (1989), pp.369-379.

Hromadka said that "my collaboration with E.Radl was one of my deepest experiences, one from which I gained much than I gave."¹²

The Bohemian Reformation had begun in the 15th century, nearly a century before the Reformation led by Luther and Zwingli. Jan Milic and Jan Hus were the most significant figures in the Bohemian Reformation. The former was a church dignitary of high rank and a royal bureaucrat, but he willingly gave up his lofty position to become a servant of reform; the latter was a well-known professor at Prague University, but was burnt for his insistence on the "Truth" and for his commitment to the people. During the period of the Reformation, the Hussites were subject to severe and brutal suppression by the Roman Catholic Church.¹³ After 1620, when the Protestant army and its king Friedrich von der Pfalz were defeated in the Battle of the White Mountain by the Catholic Hapsburg, this began what it called "*the era of darkness*". These Protestants endured until the Edict of Toleration in 1781 which limited the exclusive position of the Roman Catholic Church and recognized the existence of other churches in the Austrian Empire. However, the Protestants were only allowed to choose either the Lutheran or Reformed confessions and were not given equal rights as the Roman Catholic Church. Superficially, the Bohemian Reformation did not greatly alter the Church of that era- in contrast to the Reformation led by Luther- but its spirit remained deeply rooted in the heart of Czechs, from Chelciky, Comenius, Lucas of Prague, to Hromadka. In his books "*The Church and the Theology in Today's Troubled Time*" and "*Das Evangelium auf dem Wege Zum*

12. J.L.Hromadka, *Thought of a Czech Pastor* (London:SCM, 1970), p.35.

13. See J.M.Lochman, *Living Roots of Reformation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), pp.71-96.

Menschen"¹⁴, Hromadka noted that he was indebted to the Bohemian Reformation at least in five ways.

Firstly, it stressed the practical interpretation of the Word of God. It was not enough to proclaim the Gospel of the new life and then let the people go back into the old social conditions and do nothing to the society. Faith was obedience in service and service in obedience. As D.Bonhoeffer said: "Those who believe obey and those who have obedience believe." Secondly, it asserted that Jesus Christ was the Supreme Lord of life and soul. He not only took away the sin of mankind and sacrificed himself for mankind but also descended into man's life of misery and now holds sovereignty over the world. He is not only really present in human misery here and now but is also the victor. Thirdly, the Church was a community of pilgrims- *Communio Viatorum*. The Church should never change into an official institution, and it should be without glory, riches or ostentation, moving forward with the presence of God. Fourthly, the Church was close to the poor, the common people and the humiliated. That was why Jan Milic preached in the Czech language and built a home for prostitutes, called the "*New Jerusalem*". The proper position of the Church was on the side of the oppressed and its service was regarded as an identification with the underdog. The Church should never form a ghetto for itself. Finally, the Bohemian Reformation had a strong eschatological orientation. The view of the Kingdom of God was very concrete. The coming city of God was of paramount importance, not only as a source of private consolation but also as a challenge to the established ecclesiastical and social order. In a later section, we

14. See *The Church and Theology in Today's Troubled Time*, pp.17-20 and *Das Evangelium auf dem Wege Zum Mensch* (Witten:Luther, 1963), pp.278ff.

can see how all these elements penetrated Hromadka's theological thought, especially, his understanding of the Church.

Lastly, political and social events since the 19th century had a great effect on Hromadka [details have been discussed in Chapter One, section A]. He considered that the catastrophe of 1914 was the beginning of the end of the Constantinian era of history. The catastrophe of the years 1914-1945 was a terrible judgment upon Christian civilization and an ominous challenge to Christian theologians and churchmen to reconsider, re-examine, and re-evaluate all the theology, and practical activity. Hromadka's theology was a product of that historical and social context and also an attempt to give an answer to it.

2. HIS EXPERIENCE OF THE CHURCHES

Phrases like sterile confessionalism, morbid ecclesiasticism and bourgeois secularism are frequently found in Hromadka's writings concerning the Church. But his experience of the Church was not totally negative. In this light, his experience in Scotland where he held a more positive view of the Church, was one of the most remarkable experience in his life.

He spent a semester studying in the United Free College at Aberdeen in 1911. Despite staying there only for a few months, he recalled the life there, saying that

the months I have spent at the College of the United Free Church in Aberdeen were unexpectedly profitable and important for me. I clearly felt the Church as the very ground beneath my feet..... Not even in Scotland did I get to the essence of theology, but I did come to understand and experience much more than previously the mystery of the almighty God of love and grace.¹

Historically, the United Free Church during the middle 19th century was actively involved in the social movement. For instance, discussions about labour problems, socialism and the Kingdom of God in relation to the contemporary world were already taken place. Donald C. Smith noted that the United Free Church was the first of the Scottish Churches to recover in its corporate capacity, its prophetic witness and to engage in consistent social criticism.² In addition, during Hromadka's study in Aberdeen, David S. Cairns held the chair of Apologetic and Systematic Theology of Aberdeen United Free College. Cairn's theology placed much emphasis on objective theocentric piety rather than on personal salvation. He laid stress on the Kingdom of God interpreted on earth as in heaven. The role of the Church in the

1. J.L.Hromadka, *Thoughts of a Czech Pastor* (London:SCM, 1970), pp.17-18.
2. D.C.Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest* (New York: PeterLang, 1987), p.340.
Besides, more details can be found in pp.266-276, 340-356.

world was his major concern. The positive impression of the United Free Church and the prophetic message of Cairns marked the foundation of Hromadka's thought on the inseparable relationship between the Church and the world.

In 1931, Hromadka published an article "*Křesťanství v myšlení a životě*" [Christianity in Thought and Life] in which he unreservedly commented upon the guilt and weakness of Christian churches.³ Firstly, the churches had lost an awareness of their inner independence, because they were organized wholly within the framework of individual nations and states and they submitted to national and state demands. This institutionalization of the churches deprived them of their own inner right and freedom and of a penetrating influence on the cultural rise of nations. Secondly, the churches did not understand the needs and the decisive issues of the time. They failed to concern themselves with the needs of the working class. Roman Catholicism bore the imprint of the feudal era, while Protestantism represented the era of middle class culture and social structure in the religious sphere. Here, he especially agreed with Marx's critique of religion. In facing the new era, the churches had failed to change themselves, but maintained defensive positions, which were sometimes hostile to the working class. Even under the slogan of anti-atheistic propaganda, they hid their own personal and economic interests. Thirdly, the churches became sectarian; that is, a loss in their awareness of universality, and a departure from being a fortress where a clear voice for the whole of society with all its spheres and problems could be heard. They had withdrawn into themselves, and had become private societies for cultivation of religious life. They left the world alone and were satisfied if they themselves were left in

3. J.L.Hromadka, "From the Works of J.L.Hromadka." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.II (1959), pp.99-114.

peace. He urged the churches to find an appropriate ministry for the Word of God, and so function as the Church.

All these criticisms were frequently found in his writings before 1948. Therefore, it is obvious that his criticisms of the churches were not the result of the Communist Party coming to power in Czechoslovakia; on the contrary, the coming of communism stemmed from the failure of the churches to be a church. He appealed to the churches to be independent from any institution, to repent of their faults and their self-righteous attitude, and not to become a ghetto.

Hromadka claimed that the self-righteous attitude of the churches was wholly expressed in the Stuttgart Confession of Guilt of 1945 by the German churches. He noted that the Confessional Church was proud of its ecclesiastical opposition to the Nazi regime and refused to take part in it. Some others tried to forget it. He questioned how often the Church failed to realize its guilt and its responsibility. "What the Church urgently need," he said, "is repentance." This was one of his important starting points for understanding the Church and history. He lamented that the Church had ceased to have a message for all men in all times, and had a gospel that could only be preached in terms of a particular culture and social structure.

3. THE MAJOR THEMES OF HROMADKA'S THEOLOGY

In 1958, Hromadka published his first systematic theological work "*Das Evangelium auf dem Wege Zum Menschen*". In this he gave a full account of how God came to man, and then, how the Church ought to follow the footprints of its Lord's way to man. In this section, I will attempt to follow this sequence in order to understand the major themes of his theology in a communist context, that is, a) his Christological thought, b) the so-called philosophy of history and c) his ecclesiology.

Christology

As discussed above, Hromadka was under the influence of liberal theologians during his theological training in Heidelberg. At that time he even denied the divinity of Christ. But under the shock of the First World War, he realized the weakness of liberal theology and he turned to emphasize the theology of God. Around 1924 he became acquainted with the works of Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and of their friends, with their emphasis on Christology. Thus, the Incarnation ceased to be a movement from the bottom toward the top, as Troeltsch did, but rather from the top to the bottom.

Hromadka considers the crux of Christian theology as being dependant on the right interpretation of John 1:1-14 and Roman 11:13-22. The former is about Christology and the latter is about the judgment of God on Christian self-righteousness. He understands that

the essential theme of the Old and New Testaments is the story of the Lord Almighty, the triune God, eternal, omnipotent, righteous in grace and gracious in righteousness, descending from the glory of heaven and following sinful men who have forsaken the paradise and are

ever since walking, stumbling, erring in their path of disobedience, yes, of revolt against him.¹

The Gospel of Jesus is a Divine outcry: Seek man in his true existence. Christology is evidently his point of departure.

Hromadka follows the Chalcedonian creed, confessing that the incarnation means that God was in the flesh of Christ and became a human, but that God remains God and human remains human. The incarnation is an event between heaven and earth, between God and man, a divine intervention, a real struggle with the reality of sin and death, a struggle which culminated in the moment when Jesus died as the great sinner, yet without sin.² Incarnation is the way in which God searches for man. For Hromadka, the meaning of the incarnation is as follows. Firstly, God becomes man and this has nothing to do with the dignity and the importance of mankind himself. God becomes flesh not because Jesus manifests the glorious and respectable qualities of humanity, but on the contrary, Jesus becomes flesh and comes in the flesh under the condition and in the situation of sinful and mortal humanity. That means that Jesus is totally identified with the lowest, loneliest, most helpless and miserable conditions of man. This fundamental emphasis is very important to Hromadka because the incarnation means God's solidarity with the most wretched of mankind. Further, incarnation and solidarity also mean that God goes into their deepest depth of mankind, that is, into their misery, helplessness and suffering. That is why Hromadka frequently urges the Church to go to the "*deepest depth*" of mankind.

1. J.L.Hromadka, *Theology Between Yesterday and Tomorrow* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1957), p.38

2. J.L.Hromadka, "Jesus Christ and the Present Distress." In: *Theology Today*, Vol.2 (1945), p.32.

Secondly, he asserts that the redemptive work of Jesus is only possible in the incarnation of God Himself. Incarnation breaks through all the immanent ways of thinking about God and also through the speculative and mystic world of Hellenism and Orientalism. Incarnation rejects the Idea of Plato, the Prime Mover of Aristotle, the Categorical Imperative of Kant, the Absolute of Schelling and the Universe of Schleiermacher because God really comes to the human world and participates in human history. Any true philosophy of God demands incarnation. And only incarnation gives a satisfactory answer to the human search for truth and for the adequate understanding of Ultimate Reality. Here, Hromadka demonstrates that the incarnation and the history of man are inseparable. That means that Christ cannot be understood without referring to His real presence in the human world. At the same time, the Church ought to follow its Lord and be involved in the making of history as He is involved in history.

Thirdly, the incarnation does not draw a line around those who have been saved, or gather all the righteous together to form a society apart from sinners and common people, or organize a crusade against unbelievers. The entire world is the realm of Jesus's redemptive action. He comes to die for all men no matter whether they believe in Him or not. Jesus treads the lowest abyss of the human situation and extends his hands to every man and brings up the wounds of every suffering human creature. In his book *"Gospel for Atheists"*, Hromadka claims that

all human frontiers have been dissolved through the Sermon on the Mount, that is, all human, religious and social institution have been superseded by the transcending Order of God's kingdom..... Jesus of Nazareth has not come to proclaim a new Weltanschauung against the old, or to build a new religious organization against the sinful and disbelieving world; He has come in order to serve, to save

and through this to judge man of his false piousness, self-righteousness and disbelief.³

Fourthly, the incarnation is the word of the prophets, the word of judgment and mercy, of holiness and grace, of truth and love which puts all earthly arrogant claims, complacent ideas, and half truth to shame. The real presence of Christ means the presence of the Almighty, the sovereign, and supreme Lord. There are no boundaries to limit His love, presence and sovereignty in the world. Furthermore, the incarnation is also a calling for repentance and change.

Hromadka's understanding of the incarnation leads him to conclude that

a Christological formula cannot be a yardstick or club for measuring and biting and criticizing. It is Christ himself. But rather like a signpost directing the disoriented minds and hearts in the right direction.⁴

The Gospel is "Yes" and "Amen". Only on the ground of this "Yes", it is also a judgment. The priesthood of Jesus is another major theme in his thought, that is, Jesus died on behalf of the sin of mankind. In addition, with the insight and eschatological emphasis of the Bohemian Reformation, he is aware that the kingdom of God can never be identical with any earthly government or society. But on the other hand, it calls upon men to participate in the transformation of society.

Theology and History

Hromadka's clear positive position of communism and his interest in history has earned him the title of "*a philosopher of history cloaked as a theologian*." Charles West comments that the centre of

3. J.L.Hromadka, "Gospel for Atheists". In: *Risk*, Vol.1 (1965), p.29.

4. "Jesus Christ and the Present Distress." In: *Theology Today*, Vol.2 (1945) p.27.

Hromadka's theology is his doctrine of history.⁵ In Hromadka's writings, one constantly comes across phrases which indicate a tendency to philosophize about history, such as, "we are confronted today by a completely new era in the history of mankind", "contemporary events reflect the deep change, the turning point which has taken place in the structure of history", and "we must examine the dimensions of depth in the course of history." Nevertheless, the critics of Hromadka fail to understand the deepest meaning of Hromadka's view of history.

In order to discuss the criticism of Hromadka's view of history, it is important to define what the philosophy of history means. According to William Hordern, history is man's social life as it is remembered, comprehended, and anticipated.

The philosophy of history is the attempt to find some pattern or meaning in the flow of remembered events so that one can understand the present and adjust oneself to the future. By his philosophy of history a man decides for what he may hope and strive.⁶

If this definition is accepted, then the philosophy of history is not something which can be rejected and discarded. In contrast, the philosophy of history is important. If a man's life is not to become a flux of meaningless events from which he may reap joy or sorrow, but has to be seen within the framework of some wider meaning and purpose. At the same time, Hordern's definition also poses two questions to Hromadka: Firstly, theologically, whether he considers a certain stage of history as the revelation of God or as parallel to the Kingdom of God; secondly, whether he considers a certain pattern of history as predicted and determined through historical events. In order to understand Hromadka's view, it is important to pay attention to his

5. Charles West, *Communism and The Theologians* (London:SCM, 1958), p.65.

6. William Hordern, *Christianity, Communism and History* (London: Lutterworth, 1957), p.23.

Christological understanding, his theological emphases and his historical situation.

Hromadka believes that Christ is the Lord of the world, so there is no reason why Christians need to rule out or disregard the events of human history. Incarnation means that God comes into human history- the human confusions- and identifies Himself with man. Jesus enters earthly life to the full; he therefore cannot be related only to religious life beyond history, its purification and spiritualization; he must be sought in the middle and in the depth of the reality of history. Besides, Jesus does not lift his disciples away from the world but rather commands them to be his witness in the world. If history is the place where Jesus accepts the human lot in complete solidarity, in which he becomes contemporary in history, and dwells among us, then it must be taken with great seriousness. If Christ acts in this way, then history is not a matter of chance; it is not a matter of indifference; it is not a side show imposing no responsibility upon men, and which they can change in an arbitrary manner. It calls for human responsibility. Hromadka claimed that since history is a sphere ruled by divine providence and formed by the human confusion at the same time, the Christian Gospel can only free man from history and from all of philosophies of history within history itself. Man can not be taken out of the laws of nature and the process of ongoing history. The incarnation can be passed on only in historical categories. For Hromadka, there does not exist any theological testimony about Christ which is lacking in concrete historical components.

Repentance is one of the major elements to understand Hromadka's view of history, which cannot be found in other philosophers of

history. History reveals the sins and the debts of Christians. It notes God's judgment on the world. Hromadka's emphasis on repentance comes from his disillusion with the historical movements. The colonialism and the imperialism of the "*Christian*" nations since the fifteenth century are already marked with guilt. Since the Industrial Revolution, the "*Christian*" nations had failed to listen to the cry of the working class. In addition, the Church only served as an institution which was used by the bourgeoisie. In the Russian October Revolution, they failed to realize that it was an expression of eagerness for social justice. They even suppressed it through anti-communist propaganda and this accelerated the tragedy of 1938-1945.⁷ Hromadka claimed that the "*Christian*" nations had no right to blame anyone but themselves for the last World Wars. They were no longer guarantors of the world order and peace. Furthermore, the orbit of western democracy and civilization had not adequately and wisely assessed what had been going on in other parts of the world. How often it has happened in the history of the Church that the traditional link between the church organizations and a certain social, cultural and political patterns is taken for granted. Hromadka criticized the Western Christians as having truth but no zeal, light but no heat, ideal but no passion. All these events reveal the Christians' debt. They call Christians to repent for what they have done or have not done. The basic method and aim of Hromadka's view of history is theological; that is, an existential call to repentance, a warning of the mistakes of the past, and a challenge to take the present time seriously in the light of the Gospel. Hromadka wrote:

By repentance I mean a free and courageous recognition of our own and our fathers' and our forefathers' responsibility for what is going on not only in our countries, but in other continents..... And yet the first precondition of our

7. See "Gospel for Atheists." In: *Risk*, Vol.1 (1965), pp.19-25.

spiritual victory is, in my judgment, to understand the failure of the nominally Christian, rich, and civilized nations to assume the leadership in the most decisive moment of human history.⁸

His appeal to the Church to repent is not a purely political criticism of Western liberal democracy, but rather a deep and conscious recognition of the failure and guilt of the Church.

The Church has always been a company of real men and women standing on the earth, breathing the air of the time, and yielding avowedly or unavowedly, to the impact of the moral, religious, social, economic, political atmosphere surrounding them. It is an irresponsible act not to give attention to history or to claim that Christians have nothing to do with it. Hromadka understands that the only right philosophy is one which not only observes and explains, describes and entertains, but which takes into consideration the full human reality, both spiritual and material, and tries to change the world in the direction of full social justice, human equality, freedom from hunger, from poverty, from injustice and exploitation. [In this, it is clear that he follows the positivism of Masaryk.] Hromadka definitely insists that the way to understand history is not from the point of view of a certain philosophy of history. Neither is it proper to introduce a particular understanding of history into the realm of theology. Furthermore, he believes that

no matter how deeply we may be interested in the affairs of this world, we nevertheless look beyond history and any human ideology. Our perspective is the perspective of faith, of the Biblical message, not a perspective of history.⁹

The perspective of a Biblical understanding of history is totally different from any philosophy of history which tries to understand the historical process, its beginning and its end on the ground of

8. *Theology Between Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p.66.

9. *Ibid.*, p.58.

immanent laws of nature and society. Therefore, on the one hand, the Church and its theology should retain its sovereign freedom in regard to any historical event or any historical change. On the other hand, the Church must take history seriously and must understand the meaning of its own historical situation in order to get hold of it and to be free from the shackles and fetters of history. It is because the world in its historical moment has penetrated men's minds, souls, beliefs, sanctuaries, altars, and pulpits much more effectively than they have been ready to admit. Hromadka maintains that understanding the historical shape is a precondition to understanding the world and men with their predicaments, frustrations and hopes because the world does not exist in an abstract way. It is also a precondition to understanding oneself in a more adequate way because it is so easy for Christians to deceive themselves, interpreting present situations after the pattern of their traditional social and political concepts of institutions. For instance, the Church tends to follow the pattern of western bourgeois democracy which interprets all the difficulties and predicaments of the so-called eastern Europe as a punishment for the new revolutionary efforts for social and political reconstruction.

Hromadka claimed that

our faith based on the Word of God must be free from any historical calculation, and, I repeat, from any philosophy of history. Yes, the Gospel makes men free of history, of the *Schicksal* [destiny] of the burden of the past. However, it makes free of history within history just as it makes free of death and the grave on the spot of death and the grave. The Gospel does not ignore any reality of the human situation. On the contrary, it opens our eyes and makes us strong enough to see and to understand the realities in their deepest depth and to cope with them exactly where they exert the most sinister power. Very often our stereotype rejection of a philosophy of history is due to our unwillingness to consider earnestly our present situation. We do not realize to what extent we have been guided by a conscious and subconscious historical *status quo* that has become part and parcel of our Christian existence. We have been used to accept modern rational, liberal, or democratic

ideas of justice, freedom and legal process as genuinely Christian.¹⁰

It is a confession of Hromadka himself stating clearly what his understanding of the meaning of history is; that is, repentance and responsibility, in terms of its significance, not of its direction.

From the above analysis, despite his interest in history, Hromadka never puts communism on the level of the Kingdom of God or that of a revelation of God. Charles West comments that

[Hromadka left us] the image of a train which is on the right track, moving with proper speed and power, but which stops before the last station. Christianity is needed, on the political level, to complete the revolution which communism has begun.¹¹

It is a total misunderstanding of Hromadka's view to suppose that he regarded communism as the revelation of God. If we take into account the historical responsibility- the failure of the liberal democracy, the emphasis of Hromadka on repentance, the desire for social justice- for humanity, the Cold War propaganda of each side, and the negative attitude and non-involvement of the Church towards communism and in a communist state respectively, then, we cannot so easily conclude that Hromadka places communism higher than other political systems or sees it as the system which is nearness to God.

Hans Ruh in his book *"Geschichte und Theologie: Grundlinien der Theologie Hromadkas"* questions Hromadka's view of history in three ways. He asks: Firstly, how can it theologically be substantiated that one can or must decide, on the ground of the Gospel or of faith, that the Church should show a positive attitude towards a certain historical development or not? Secondly, how can the Church and

10. J.L.Hromadka, "The Crisis of the Ecumenical Fellowship." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.I (1958), pp.21-22.

11. Charles West, *Communism and the Theologians* (London:SCM, 1958), p.63.

theology at all discern and assert the irreversibility of a historical development? Thirdly, is the emphasis on the Church's orientation towards the future not an undue and exaggerated preference for one single aspect among others? Hromadka responds to these criticisms as follows. Firstly, Hromadka clearly states that it is a danger for Christians to identify themselves with any particular point of history. But the major problems of the Church are its ego-centric non-involvement, and its failure to penetrate the root of events. The Church is only an observer and attempts to single out this event- communism- from the events of history. Secondly, Hromadka notes that the word "*irreversibility*" is not clear in Ruh's understanding. He asks how can one hope to return to the old order which is marked by blood, suffering, exploitation and destruction. The real point is only that the privileged classes do not want to give up their privileges. Hromadka states unequivocally that he does not know the future, whether it depends on communism or democracy, but he knows that it is justifiable to fight for justice and humanity. Thirdly, Hromadka denies that his view is taken from an eschatological perspective, rather it is anchored in the presence of the Crucified and Risen Christ. That means that Jesus is in the front of the Church and the Church needs to follow him as its only leader. The direction of the Church towards the future is necessary.¹² From the above dialogue between Hromadka and Ruh, it appears that Hromadka does not answer Ruh's questions straightforwardly. It seems that Hromadka fails to address the central weakness of his theology. But I think that the dialogue itself marks a departure from the basic assumption between Hromadka and Ruh, a representative of the West. That is to say, in Ruh's understanding, Hromadka's standpoint is purely a political decision. According to him, Hromadka's mistake is to

12. Hans Ruh, *Geschichte und Theologie: Grundlinien der theologie Hromadkas* (Zurich:Evz, 1963), pp.36-47.

understand and support a political trend in the light of Christian faith which is biblically unacceptable. For Hromadka, his concern is not a purely political matter, rather a matter of humanity and responsibility. Therefore, what he justifies biblically is the Christian's responsibility in the world rather than a political decision [though sometimes it seems to be a political action]. In the historical context, the self-righteousness of the Church, and the Church's dependence on a particular historical movement led the Church to regard communism as something like an anti-Christ but without a specific statement on its own failure. Its negative attitude to, and the tendency of ghettoism, make it far removed from man's need. Hromadka's view is an outcome of his commitment to humanity and his awareness of the responsibility of the Church. It is a great mistake to view his decision as solely a political decision without paying attention to the historical situation and his subsequent suffering.

In a letter to Barth in 1963, Hromadka wrote:

When I see how modern Christianity, including many Christians in the Czech republic, still cannot understand or take seriously our historical situation, I have no choice but to present our problems in historical perspective..... I have never maintained that the Western world and its civilization are moving toward their decline and fall. And I always try to hammer it home to our Czech Christians that the future does not lie exclusively in the hands of the Communists, but depends also on whether we Christians—including those of the West—can understand the situation of present-day humanity, and bear living and practical witness in the freedom of the Gospel, the sovereignty of faith, and love for men, not in opposition to communism, or the Soviet Union, or China, but in a positive way.¹³

Hromadka's effort is to urge and encourage the Church and its theologians to face history courageously. His purpose is not to adapt to history, and its changes, or to mould theological thought in accordance with history but to attain real theological control of any

13. Jurgen Fangmeier ed., *Karl Barth Letters 1961-1968* (Edinburgh: T&T Clarks, 1981), pp.344-345.

historical situation; that is to say, Jesus frees us from history within history. Lochman remarks that Hromadka was a genuine theologian, though perhaps sometimes in the cloak of a philosopher of history.¹⁴ Barth shares Lochman's understanding, saying:

[What Lochman said about Hromadka], this is what I think, and by it I mean that you [Hromadka] assume the cloak of a man who can treat the two sides of that analogy as though they were reversible, and whose theological music sometimes has for that reason an impure [or, shall we say, a less pure] sound. "Sometimes"—yes, only sometimes, on the not infrequent occasions when you undertake to require not only of your Czech friends but of all of us *urbi et orbi* that we should master the historical situation theologically in the light and by the hand of your political analyses, taking it seriously exactly as you see it for the sake of the way of Jesus Christ.¹⁵

Ecclesiology

As mentioned above, the starting point of Hromadka's understanding of the Church is the way which God comes to man, that is, incarnation and solidarity. In addition, his unique heritage of the Bohemian Reformation gives him a more concrete understanding of what the Church is; that is, a pilgrim—*Communio Viatorum*. Now, I will attempt to understand how these two elements are interweaved in his ecclesiology.

Following the Bohemian Reformation, Hromadka highly stresses the importance of the Church:

An elementary longing for the Church beautiful, for a living, profound, solid fellowship of faith, hope and love, which is the basis of Christian life in the world. With its embodiment of agape—fragmentary though it may be—it creates a new atmosphere in the world, a fellowship where some small part of the Kingdom of God is brought into being.¹⁶

14. J.M.Lochman, "Historical Events and Ethnical Decision." In: *Theology Today*, Vol.21 (1963), p.217.

15. Jurgen Fangmeier ed., pp.105-106.

16. J.Smolik, "Faith and Illusion." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.VII (1964), p.294.

It is the reason why, on the one hand, Hromadka often shows his confidence that the Church in a communist society cannot only survive but can also exert its influence on the government. On the other hand, he criticizes the Church so severely because he loves it just as Jesus criticizes the Pharisees because he loves them so much and desires that they should be converted. Besides, the Church is the community of pilgrims- *Communio Viatorum*. That means that it is always on the road and moving forwards. It must not accustom itself to any system and its customs. It is free from any social, political and ecclesiastical structure and has a direction to go, towards the New Heaven and the New Earth. It is a congregation, not an institution. Hromadka's critique of the Church is that it adapts itself to a particular life style, particular political thinking and particular social structure in which it loses its inner freedom.

With his high emphasis on Christology, Hromadka succeeds in avoiding the extreme understanding of the Church as being something totally irrelevant to the world. Firstly, Jesus Christ is in the midst of human affairs; therefore, Hromadka cannot think of the Church without the world. The Church is for the world. It lives at a quite definite place and in a quite definite time. It is by its nature related to the world and bears upon its shoulders all the misery and sorrow, all the perversion, and also the radiant hope and expectation, of the whole of humanity. It lives in the fullness of human interrelations. In addition, the Church is an inner unity of those who follow the footstep of Jesus at the lowest depths of human life, in the midst of poverty and sin, suffering and weakness, morality and corruption. There is no place where the Church cannot go and endure because Jesus is present in human history and even in mankind's misery.

Secondly, the Church knows, or it should know, that the whole world is under divine guidance and destiny, judgment and grace, and under the kingship of Jesus Christ. Its noble functions, that is, its prophetic and priestly functions, are to tell the world simply and humbly, without any selfish claim, about the Crucified and Risen Lord in the midst of the world, and to interpret this reality in an urgent and burning way. Hromadka reminds the Church that the prophetic role must never be separated from its priestly role. The prophetic role is responsible to its Lord to proclaim clearly and fearlessly the will of the living God, and man's obedience to Jesus Christ in which it addresses not only society but also the Church itself. The priestly role is to take upon itself the guilt, sin and corruption of the whole world, just as the "*Suffering Servant*". If we compare Hromadka's theology of Church before and after 1948, it is very obvious that Hromadka shifts his emphasis from the prophetic role of the Church towards society, which emphasis he expressed prior to 1945, to that of the priestly role of the Church in the time of communist rule. This is mainly due to the change of the society's structure and the Church's status in a communist society.

Thirdly, in order to fulfill the above tasks, the Church must ceaselessly fight for the purity of its message and its mission. Like human beings, the Church is burdened by traditionalism. Therefore, Hromadka urged that it was the responsibility of theologians to unmask the unchristian elements which had arisen in the course of historical development and had covered the Biblical testimony and had become sanctified as inviolable and unerring truth.

In 1947, Hromadka drew attention to the fact that

the Church used to be reservoir of spiritual power, a storehouse of fuel keeping the fire of faith and devotion burning..... If the Church ceases to be a reservoir of dynamic faith and a spring of creative power the whole life is in danger of losing spiritual integration, and will turn toward other movements and institutions which give man a purpose and unity of life and save him from futility and frustration.¹⁷

Hromadka's statement implies two things; firstly, that the rise of communism stems from the failure of the Church to respond to social injustice. That is why he said that the godlessness of the world reflected the godlessness of the Church and atheism might be a result of the discovery of man under the rubble of official Christianity, church-sanctioned bondage, injustice and exploitation.¹⁸ Secondly, there is ever an opportunity for the Church to exert its spiritual power and influence in the present world, even under the situation of communist rule. That is why the Church should never be a ghetto, but descend to those places where the people are and take upon itself their poverty, wretchedness, weakness and helplessness.

With the stimulation of Karl Barth, Hromadka found that the crisis theology could meet the weakness of liberal theology which he had accepted at the beginning. For him, the centre of Christianity is no more philosophy, but the incarnation of God; that is, Jesus is identified with man. Furthermore, the incarnation of God called the Church to be involved in and to transform the world. In order to be faithful to its mission, the Church should take history seriously so that it could discern the needs of the world instead of being led and moulded by the world. Hromadka's theology is deeply rooted in his understanding of Christology and is further contextualized in his view of history; that is his historical context. Theology, the Church and the world are very closely related and cannot be separated. It is

17. J.L.Hromadka, "One Year Later." In: *Theology Today*, Vol.4 (1947), p.40.

18. "Gospel for Atheist." In: *Risk*, Vol.1 (1965), p.25.

obvious that Hromadka's way of doing theology is practical rather than theoretical, and contextualized rather than abstract.

C. Discussion

When considering the suffering from the World Wars, and after experiencing the Russian October Revolution, Hromadka became aware that democracy- which the West claimed would make the world safe- was only a camouflage for its exploitation and greed. He asserted that the Democratic West was no longer to be the sole leader of the world. The rise of communism was a phenomenon of the failure of "*Christian*" nations in history. Hromadka's positive attitude towards communism was neither conformity nor opportunism, because in the early 1920s' he had already shown his positive attitude towards communism. He believed that certain points of Marxist thought might prove fertile ground for theological reflection: in particular the linking of theory with practical life [praxis]; an emphasis on historical conditioning in the development of political theory; the relationship between human freedom and social justice for the whole community, and the striving after change which would result in a more equal and fraternal society for humanity.

At the same time Hromadka clearly saw the dangers inherent in the Marxist programme; for example, the danger of interpreting humanity as just as one part of some superior impersonal process of nature and history; and self-deception in the predicting of a social order capable of solving all material, moral and spiritual problems. He stated firmly that the message of Scripture transcended both nature and history as an "*absolute*" reference, and contradicted any secular hope which pretended that man, on his own, could engineer a new heaven and a new earth. But he reserved the view that man could not live and work without such an imperfect and provisional hypothesis." His view of Marxism noted a remarkable divergence from the so-called Western

line, that is, anti-communist. His attitude brought him into a very hard position both from inside and outside of Czechoslovakia.

Among his critics from outside, Charles West held that

in theory, it retains a robust independence of political influence. In practice, however, this picture of the two lines of Church and world seems almost dualistic. Although Hromadka proclaims the Christians' urgent involvement in the world in the name of Christ, this involvement has more the flavour of subjection to an alien law and alien hopes- for the building of great societies and cultures- than the flavour of service to the Lord of history according to his will in his domain.¹

Is this criticism justifiable? It is impossible to assess Hromadka's view of communism without taking his theology and his historical context into consideration. Hromadka said that there were three motifs which had determined his decision and work. They were as follows.

Firstly, my starting point was the conviction that we have entered a period in 1948 from which there is no way back. In other words, it is our duty to understand seriously the deep break introduced into our life by the events of the first month of 1948, not to look back and to go forward. Secondly, only a genuine and sound theology can help us to master the situation..... I was horrified at voices heard from some quarters with various degrees of excitement, and suggesting that the Church and faith were in their substance threatened by current upheavals and by the ascensions of the working class organized and led by Marxists. I saw how weak we were in our faith and theology, how cowardly could be even our faith. Thirdly, the struggle can be waged in the positive fullness of faith alone in harmony with that glorious "Yes" and "Amen" resounding from the Gospel of Jesus Christ and valid for the whole world..... This struggle must be waged with a profound understanding of the historic situation. It must be waged without defiant or bitter resentment against things we may not like at the first sight, and with open eyes for the new events.²

From this statement and his other writings, I find that Hromadka's standpoint concerning communism is not purely a political decision, but a response of his faith to the world. This is frequently

1. Charles West, *Communism and the Theologians* (London:SCM, 1958), p.67.
2. *Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia*, Vol.VII (1960), pp.43-44. It quoted from J.L.Hromadka, *Von der Reformation zum Morgen* (Leipzig: Kochler und Amelang, 1959), p.379f.

misunderstood. I shall attempt to discern the reasons why Hromadka's critics did not agree with him, on the one hand; and to discuss his methodology, and the significance of his theology, on the other hand.

Firstly, the basic difference between Hromadka's and his critics' is their understanding of humanity. Generally speaking, his critics consider that communism is a danger to mankind because it tends to give way to the monopoly of power, and eventually, leads to totalitarianism. For instance, J.C.Bennett comments that communism precludes a transcendent judgment upon every society. A nation or a social order which acknowledges that it stands under God is open to criticism, correction and growth, but this is not true in a communist state. Furthermore, communism creates a false optimism that leaves people unprepared for the new forms of evil that will appear in a communist society.³ Communism does not have any self-control mechanism. Thus, Hromadka's critics understand humanity mainly in terms of the "*balance of power*" which is regarded as so important to protect human dignity and freedom. According to Hromadka, humanity is understood more in terms of the "*welfare of mankind*". He stresses that the protection of human freedom and human right are important, provided that they give full consideration to the present welfare of mankind; that is, food, housing and education.

In the first half of the 20th century, those who oppose communism are mostly not the poor and the exploited. They have already solved the question of survival- the basic necessity. Psychologically, it is understandable why the issue of the balance of power is given a high priority. [Hromadka is wrong to conclude so simply that the reason why the West was against communism is because it only wants to keep

3. J.C.Bennett, *Christianity and Communism Today* (New York: Association, 1961), pp.82-83.

its power and privileges.] In contrast, those who support Marxism are mainly the poor and the hungry. For instance, one of the reasons for the Chinese Communists' success in 1949 was their identity with the peasants and workers- those who suffered under the existing so-called democratic system. Yet in the West, there were a large number of people unemployed even before the Second World War. Many people lived and worked in very miserable conditions. That is why Hromadka sets the issue of the welfare of mankind as being more important and urgent than the issue of the balance of power and political ideal. This is also what Nicolas Berdyeav said about that

the question of bread for myself is a material question, but the question of bread for my neighbours, for everybody, is a spiritual and a religious question. Man does not live by bread alone, but he does live by bread and there should be bread for all. Society should be so organized that there is bread for all, and then it is that the spiritual question will present itself before men in all its depth.⁴

This is the response of Hromadka at a particular time, and in a particular place and a particular situation; that is, the experience of Munich Incident, the constant contact with the suffering, and the one-sided opposition of the West to communist countries. Hromadka sides with communism simply because he numbers himself among the poor. It does not mean that Hromadka leaves the problem of power aside. So many times, he indirectly warned the Communist Government to be careful of its monopoly of power.

H.Ruh notes that Hromadka is influenced by eastern European humanism. The pathos of mankind is the starting point of Hromadka's attempt to understand communism and the contemporary crisis. H.Ruh argues that the western theologians neglect this important heritage of Hromadka's theology and only discuss his theology at a rational and

4. Nicolas Berdyeav, *The Origin of Russian Communism*, trans. R.M.French (London:Geoffrey Bles, 1955), p.185.

intellectual level.⁵ Ruh is right. Hromadka is particularly interested in Russian revolutionary literature [what H.Ruh calls the eastern European humanism], and even understands Russian communism in the light of this tradition. But it does not imply that Hromadka is a humanist rather than a theologian. Because of his suffering from historical events, repentance is his point of departure. Repentance first comes to him, then, to the Church, and finally to society. His work is not solely a humanist work but rather a theological work. The Russian revolutionary literature helps Hromadka care for the reality of mankind and marks his awareness of the failure of the Church and the "*Christian*" nations which need repentance. On the contrary, the failure of the Church and the "*Christian*" nations to repent for what they have done and work for a better justice and brotherhood of mankind are crucial. Hromadka shows us that a theologian is a "*humanist*" at the same time. That means that any theological work must link up the concrete life and the real situation of mankind.

Secondly, the difference between Hromadka and his critics is their analysis and interpretation of their contemporary situation. Hromadka writes:

We are in the middle of a total reconstruction of society in Central and Eastern Europe. What is at stake is not just a political change in the international situation, not just political reform in our countries, but the profound historical collapse of our civilization, our way of life and secular hopes for the future. The highest ideals and standards of western democracy have, in our view, ceased to be the norm, the standard and the arbiter of the future of man and of civilization. Unfortunately only a few people in the western churches have taken this seriously..... I am personally convinced that western democracy with its institutions, standards and culture, which failed in the critical years from 1918 to 1938, is unable to solve the problems of these areas. What was and is still necessary is a mighty effort and the readiness for sacrifices- of course with many failures, mistakes and shortcomings- to create a new stable social structure, a new beginning for these

5. H.Ruh, *Geschichte und Theologie: Grundlinien der Theologie Hromadkas* (Zurich: EvZ-Verlag, 1963), p.24.

people, and to offer them new hope and a new incentive for more meaningful endeavour.³

Here, Hromadka employs a Marxist interpretation of history as his own way of understanding the world but he never accepts its historical or materialistic determinism unreservedly.

The questions fall on Hromadka's statement as follows. First of all, whether his analysis of the world is valid or not; that is, in terms of the crisis of civilization. Second, whether his conclusion is justifiable or not; that is, that western democracy can do nothing in Central and eastern Europe after the Second World War. Third, whether his solution is convincing or not; that is, communism can create a stable social structure for mankind to work for. Referring to the first question, his view of the crisis of civilization is stimulated by T.G.Masaryk and is further confirmed by Emanuel Radl, on the one hand and is shared by others like D.Bonhoeffer and W.A.Visser't Hooft on the other hand. [This has been discussed in section A] Concerning the second question, if we take account of the historical suffering of Hromadka, that is, the Munich Incident, we can see why he talks in this way. Certainly, his view is never supported by both political and theological arguments. However, his personal experience cannot be disregarded and minimized. Regarding the third question, it is important to distinguish Hromadka's concern for a government- which can create a new stable social structure- from his acceptance of communism. What I mean here is: Hromadka considers that communism can fulfill his concern, and its ideology is only secondary. This is where Hromadka is frequently misunderstood. Critics allege that he considers communism as the "*wave of the future*". Hromadka claims that no earthly government structure can fully meet the crisis

6. J.L.Hromadka, "The Christian in the Communist Society." In: *The demands of Freedom* by Helmut Gollwitzer (London:SCM, 1965), pp.152-153.

of civilization. What Hromadka does is to take sides. He takes the risk of trying to change the world rather than to preserve its existing order which he regarded as full of injustice and exploitation; that is, he accepts communism. Besides, he also takes the risk of transforming communism from within. Communism is not the central matter for him. Mankind is what matters most! His weakness is his confidence in communism. That means that communist governments can be transformed from within in an appropriate time. Because of that confidence, he did not regard the dangers brought about by communist revolutions as being more destructive and threatening than the original situation.

Thirdly, as regards his methodology of assessing Marxism and the Democratic West, Hromadka gives two different standards. On the one hand, although he knows exactly what had happened in Soviet Russia since 1917, such as, the Great Purge in the 1930s, he fails to take any of these facts into his consideration and judgment. He explains this by stating that 40 year history of Soviet Russian Communism is not long enough to assess a system, and its failure to progress towards democracy is largely the result of anti-communist propaganda in the West. On the other hand, he never refers to any propaganda by the East against the West, for example, "*Western imperialism*".... etc. Besides, his generous and apologetic spirit towards communist governments cannot be found in his criticism of the West, and he does not give any credit to the ideal of democracy in discussions. It seems that Hromadka employs the philosophical-intellectual form of Marxism to evaluate a Marxist state on the one hand, and uses the democratic West to understand democracy, on the other hand. His double standards and interpretations only bring misunderstanding and perhaps confusion. It is his great blind spot. He accuses the West

of being one-sided in its judgment of the east, but he does not take into consideration of his predisposition to communism. That means that he seldom criticizes communist governments. His one-sidedness can be defended by saying that during the Cold War, criticism of a socialist government was suppressed. Furthermore, the anti-communist propaganda of the West, and the self-righteousness attitude of the Church created the historical conditions for Hromadka's one-sidedness. However, it cannot be denied that he defends communist governments deliberately; that is, to over-emphasize the best and conceal the worst.

Fourthly, Hromadka's theology is characterized by an emphasis on the Church's involvement in social life. His so-called "*philosophy of history*" is evidence of this. He never lets the Church go its own way of leading an undisturbed life and private sanctification. He never separates theology from prophecy, in order that theology may be deemed instrumental and relevant to life in the modern world. The sole purpose of his theological reflection is to deepen the awareness of the Church's involvement in shaping a more human, just and joyful society. Martin Rumscheidt in his article "*Die Theologie Hromadkas auf dem Weg zur Kirche der kleinen Leute*"⁷ considers that the theology of Hromadka may be linked with Liberation Theology. His arguments are as follows. Because his theology stands in the tradition of the Bohemian Reformation [Jan Hus sided with the poor], Hromadka welcomes all changes for the overcoming of the old social system. The revolution is an expression of Christ's dynamism; that is, revolution intends to help mankind. The Gospel, in Hromadka's understanding, is Jesus declaring his solidarity with the suffering people. Hromadka

7. Martin Rumscheidt, "Die Theologie Hromadkas auf dem Weg zur Kirche der kleinen Leute." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.,XXXII (1989), pp.167-179.

takes Marxist critique on Christianity seriously. Further, he includes "*history*" in his theological reflection and is open-minded towards radical changes. Liberation theology is a "*theology in departure*". Its orientation is forward looking. It is liberation leading to repentance and solidarity. It is also what Hromadka stresses in his doing of theology. Finally, Hromadka has a great impact on Richard Shaull who contributes to the development of liberation theology [Shaull met Hromadka in Princeton Theological Seminary]. But I think that Rumschiedt is going too far here. It is indeed true that we can find convergence between Hromadka's theology and liberation theology. But their divergence lies in their different attitude towards the leading ideology and the existing government. As A.Fierro wrote:

In those [socialist] countries, theology does not seem to be very critical toward power and political order. It remains a public and practical theology, but it has lost the note of criticism which is characteristic of such theology in other areas of the world.⁸

Liberation theologians employ Marxist analysis to examine, and even to criticize the leading ideology; that is, capitalism, and the unjust and corrupted government. Hromadka uses Marxist analysis to criticize the Church and the Democratic West, but without any direct and outspoken criticism falling on the leading Communist Party. If one of the major characteristics of Liberation Theology as Fierro said is to challenge the established unjust and immoral government and its ideology [which is not only limited to the so-called capitalist government], then, Hromadka's theology is far removed from it. Although Hromadka's theology lacks this note of criticism, this does not imply that his theology is a kind of conformist theology as A.Fierro suggested:

The deference of theology in socialist countries to the existing regimes seems very much like that displayed by

8. Alfredo Fierro, *The Militant Gospel* (London:SCM, 1977), p.197.

older political theology toward existing authority, [that is, the Constantinian order].⁹

It is through Christian-Marxist dialogue that Hromadka has endeavoured to unmask the unmarxist elements of communist governments, even though his method might be regarded as too passive and indirect. Furthermore, Hromadka rejected any attempt to use the Church or its theology to support a state in return for its privileges. His view is fully expressed in an article "*The Church's Dependence on God and Its Independence from Man*". Nevertheless the Gospel, which has political relevance, is the prerequisite for the work of J.L.Hromadka.

Having made a careful study and consideration of the development of Hromadka's theology, his early experience, his primary writings, the historical and social settings, and the criticism made on him by others, such as, Charles West and M.Spinka, I think that Hromadka has made a great contribution towards the Church in a communist context, despite his too optimistic attitude towards communism. Theoretically, his positive and constructive approach to Marxism helps both Christians and even Marxists to understand themselves in a way which is better and deeper. The Christian-Marxist dialogue is one of the best evidence of these. Further, he takes the Marxist critique on religion seriously, and so the Church can realize and face its failures solemnly. Theologically, his emphases on the close relationship between the world and the Church, the immediate need of repentance, and the incarnation are biblically sound and well-grounded, especially in a context which is full of fear, mistrust and antagonism. Practically, Hromadka's approach to a subject is not limited to theory but comes from his own practical experience of life. Praxis is always his motto. For instance, his experiment is to transform the Czechoslovak communism. No one can deny that the

9. Ibid., p.218.

Czechoslovak mode of communism might be regarded as a successful example of transformation in the spring of 1968.

Hromadka's ethical decision is determined by his personal experience and historical situation. Since he experienced and shared in the misery of the people from his childhood, and suffered from the Munich Incident, his preference for communism is understandable. The Cold War, and the policy of Communist Government suppression of religion help us to understand why he says less even nothing against the injustice within a communist state. Concurrently, his great mistake is to over-emphasize the best and conceal the worst! His uncritical attitude and one-sided standpoint towards communist governments can hardly be accepted- even though I share his goodwill and understand the historical situation. But I consider that it is not necessary for a person to accept Hromadka's solution or his approaches to resolving problems in order to appreciate the fact that he was a man of genuine integrity. He applied his best knowledge to the meaning of the Christian Gospel as well as his considerable energy to a troubled world, and did not only regard what communism was but also endeavoured to transform it. Charles West wrote:

He [Hromadka] has been a witness to Christian and atheist, to existentialist and materialist, of the faith and hope whereby that new world may be grasped and humanized.¹⁰

Milan Machovec, a Marxist philosopher, said,

"Only Christians like Pope John XXIII or the Czech Protestant theologian Hromadka could create a situation in which Marxists had to start thinking about religion in a more subtle way: for only such deeply Christian spirits could not be denounced, even by the strictest guardians of Marxist orthodoxy, as mere pawns of capitalism or as dispensary of opium to the people."¹¹

Those are surely telling tributes.

10. Paul Mojzes, "In Memoriam: J.L.Hromadka." In: *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol.7 (1970), p.530.

11. Milan Machovec, *A Marxist Looks at Jesus* (London:DLT, 1977), p.31.

CHAPTER TWO

JAN M. LOCHMAN: HIS THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS

A. His theological development

J.M. Lochman was born in Nove Mesto in 1922. During the War, he was accepted as a theological student in the Jan Hus Seminary. Originally, he wanted to study philosophy instead of theology and hoped to revert back to philosophy after the War. During the period of Nazi-occupation in Prague, Lochman was appointed as an assistant pastor because of the degree of protection offered to clergy at that time. After the War, his semi-legal studies were recognized and by that time, he was won for theology. Besides, he also studied at St. Andrews (Scotland) and at Basle. Lochman was influenced by J.B. Soucek and H.I. Iwand, but chiefly by Karl Barth and J.L. Hromadka. He received the degree of Th.D. from the University of Prague in 1948, and the following year was ordained as a minister of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren. From 1950, he lectured in theology and philosophy at the Comenius Faculty, and succeeded J.L. Hromadka as Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy in 1960. In addition, Lochman was also active in ecumenical circles. Following the 1961 General Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in New Delhi, Lochman was asked to serve as a member of the working committee on Church and Society. After that, he was involved in the 1966 World Conference on Church and Society in Geneva and the 1968 Uppsala Assembly respectively. Lochman wrote:

These unforgettable confrontations of the worldwide Church with the emerging worldwide society became an enduring challenge to my theological attempts.¹

1. J.M. Lochman, *Church in a Marxist Society* (London: SCM, 1970), p. 11.

During democratization in Czechoslovakia in the spring of 1968, he was the first Christian theologian for two decades to be invited to speak on radio. At the time of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia on August 21, 1968, Lochman was visiting his parents in his home town. But before that, he had already resolved to leave for Switzerland because he had accepted a call to be Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Basle. Before taking up that position, however, he was to be a Visiting Professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York for one year. Despite the Soviet invasion, Dubcek's government still held office for several months before a great change occurred in the government structure. Lochman was allowed to leave Czechoslovakia but was disillusioned and sorrowful over the fate of his country. This can be observed in his writings in the latter part 1969 and 1970.² Since 1969, he has been Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Basle, and this marks a new page in his theological development.

From the above very brief summary of Lochman's life in Czechoslovakia, I would like to draw attention to three points in order to understand his theological development more contextually. Firstly, his involvement in the working committee of Church and Society of the World Council of Churches has had a far-reaching influence on him. Lochman's exchange of ideas with theologians and scientists, and his contact with church leaders of different countries broadened his ecumenical thinking. His concern ceased to be exclusively concerned with the First and the Second Worlds, but was also with the Third World. Moreover, the ecumenical movement during

2. In 1969, he published articles like "The Church and the Humanisation of Society"; "European Humanism: A Theological Evaluation"; "Reflection on Resistance". In 1970, like "Marxism, Liberalism and Religion: An East European Perspective"; "Radical secularity and Radical Grace"; "Reconciliation and Creation".

the 1960s was characterized by a social dimension in faith. Lochman was substantially affected by this. His writings after 1962 show us that he laid stress on the role of the Church in society. One remarkable change in his theological emphasis occurred whilst he was in Prague. His writings in the late 1950s and the early 1960s emphasized his concern on peace; from the early 1960s, and particularly after the 1966 World Conference on Church and Society held in Geneva, he emphasized his concern for democratic socialism. It can be said that 1966 was a watershed in Lochman's theological development in Prague.

Secondly, the 1960s was a time during which the political and social atmosphere of Czechoslovakia was in a state of gradual change after the denunciation of Stalinism in 1958; at this time Lochman's theological thought was mature. In 1966 he described the situation in Czechoslovakia over the previous few years as one of "positive and growing democratization."³ The year 1968 in particular, when Dubcek's government came to power with a slogan- "*Socialism with human face*"- marked an important time in Czech history. On the other hand, the development and the contribution of the Christian-Marxist dialogue in Czechoslovakia cannot be neglected. With the encouragement and effort of J.L.Hromadka and M.Machovec, the Christian-Marxist dialogue became visible in 1964. The dialogue that took place in Marienbad in 1967 marked the climax of it. The openness of the dialogue, the recovery of interest in biblical tradition and the emphasis on humanization (the study on the Early Marx) were the situation in which Lochman formulated his theological thoughts and theological writings.

3. J.M.Lochman, "The Church and Society". In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.IX (1966), p.219.

Thirdly, in Lochman's theological writings, it is important to differentiate between those written whilst he was in Prague and those whilst he was in Basle: the social and historical settings of the two are totally different. For instance, in Prague, the Church plays a minority role in society but in Basle, the Church enjoys a certain prestige; in Prague, the Government controls the contents of writings and speeches, but in Basle, there is no censorship. The differences in social and historical settings also affected the different emphasis of Lochman's theology.⁴

One other influence on Lochman's theological thought is the Bohemian Reformation. Here, I do not want to repeat its history and the significances it had for Czech Protestantism; this has already been dealt with.⁵ But in addition to the points already discussed, there is one insight which Lochman drew from it. One of the five distinctive marks of the Bohemian Reformation, as highlighted by Lochman, is its witness for peace:

The movement of Czech Protestantism always emphasized the peace mission of Christian communities..... The concern for peace itself and the Church's task of fostering peace belong to the basic emphasis of the theological and practical work of the Czech Reformation. It existed from the initial impulse of the Hussite movement.⁶

Lochman believed that the Czech Protestants had a special mission to bring peace and reconciliation not only to divided Christians but also to politically divided nations.⁷ In the late 1950s onwards, Lochman

4. See J.M.Haworth, *The Contextuality of Theology: J.M.Lochman, Theologian Between Czechoslovakia and Switzerland*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, pp.148-184. He discussed the different emphasis of Lochman's theology in Prague and Basle under the following themes: the doctrine of Christ, Servant and Prometheus; the doctrine of God, atheism and Trinity; the doctrine of grace, radical grace and liberation.
5. See Chapter One, pp.50-51.
6. *Church in a Marxist Society*, p.43.
7. James Bentley, *Between Marx and Christ* (London:NLB, 1982), p.108. From J.M.Lochman, *Die Not der Versöhnung*.

interpreted peace in the light of the Cold War. He considered that the Cold War was no different from war. He wrote:

The essence of Cold War is war. No shot has been fired yet, but the antagonist is already regarded as one at whom actually shots ought to have been fired, whom it is definitely necessary to weaken, intimidate and hold down. Thus the spirit of war is present, the spirit of him who was "a murderer from the beginning" [John 8:44] means it is present, even before the murder is committed.⁸

Later, under the influence of the World Conference of Church and Society in Geneva in 1966, Lochman also drew from the same tradition, that is, the Bohemian Reformation, and understood that peace did not mean quietism and pacifism. He wrote:

The Bohemian Reformation was a revolution. The Word of God was understood and interpreted in a genuinely revolutionary way in Hussite Bohemia and Moravia, in an attempt to transform not just the Church, but society as well. The "social dimension" of Christian obedience was clearly recognized from Hus onwards- and practised..... The movement was marked by extreme tension between the theological defenders of revolutionary violence and the convinced supporters of an evangelical non-violent spiritual struggle, represented especially by Peter Chelcicky and later by the Bohemian Brethren. This conflict was by no means a rigid opposition of two extremes, but that "mobile dialectic" of a common search toward following the coming Kingdom of God. This motif of discipleship united the whole reformation movement, even when the specific paths of this discipleship divided.....⁹

Therefore, peace in Lochman's mind was more a constructive concern rather than commitment to an inflexible principle. He did not regard non-violence as an absolute which everyone should follow but a relative issue. It was a matter of theological priority.

8. J.M.Lochman, "Theology in an era of Cold War." In: *Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia*, Vol.VII (1960), pp.57-58.

9. J.M.Lochman, "Peace and Revolution." In: *The Reformed and Presbyterian World*, Vol.XXX (1968), pp.113-114.

B. His understanding of a socialist society

Lochman's understanding of a socialist society can be comprehended in two ways. Firstly, in theory, how he examines the nature of Marxism and secondly, in practice, how he experiences life in a socialist society. Regarding the first question, Lochman considers the words of Karl Marx: "To overthrow all conditions under which man is an oppressed, enslaved, destitute, and despised being", and holds this as evidence of Marx's basic concern for humanisation. But in his quotation, Lochman dismisses some words intentionally, that is, "the criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that man is the highest being for man, that is, with the categorical imperative to."¹ If I take the intention of Lochman's quotation of Marx's saying as the point of departure to understand Lochman's view of Marxism, then I can make the following observations. Firstly and principally, Lochman's understanding of Marxism is rather positive. Marx's intention is to remove alienation. There is a basic difference between Marxism with its constructive and humanist possibilities, and its fascist aspects which are destructive and nihilist. It is the humanist face of Marxism which Lochman takes seriously. Secondly, Lochman does not agree with Marxists that the criticism of religion is the basis of all criticisms. The failure of the Church in history puts Marx in an anti-religious position. Marx's religious attitude has its historical bounds and cannot be ideologized and absolutized. Thirdly, Lochman does not see any reason why the Church cannot co-operate with the Marxist Government in working for humanisation. Lochman considers that the goal of democratic socialism in a sense corresponds to the deepest insight of the biblical prophetic tradition. How, then does Lochman's basic understanding of Marxism relate to his understanding

1. David McLellan, *Marx before Marxism* (London:Macmillan, 1970), p.123.

of Marxism as a whole and to his concrete experience in Czechoslovakia?

Concerning the totalitarianism of communism, Lochman insists that

the Marxist idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be *a priori* condemned if socialism is accepted as a step forward on the path to humanisation. No one can moralize about this. In all probability it is a necessity of the post-revolutionary order in its first stage. The danger of such a post-revolutionary order, however, is that it does not discern the signs of the times-*in-time*. That means that it is tempted to eternalize its monopoly and to prolong it beyond the point of possible justification- that is, beyond the stage of achievement of a firmly established socialist system.²

Even though Marxism has a tendency towards dogmatism, Lochman considers that the Marxists philosophy of praxis has some built-in elements that avoid this. He explains the philosophy of praxis as follows.

One does not have all the solutions, so to say, beforehand. In acting, man creates a new reality, new conditions, by that action. This philosophy of *praxis* was always then a classical Marxist idea. It checked the temptation of rationalist determinism. Thus, Marxism always had some "built-in" possibilities of disenchanting fatalistic conceptions of history. It always had certain resources for rethinking the situation, reacting to new conditions, and acting *responsively*. The great contribution of Marxism probably lies exactly here, in its basic dialectic. Marxism is neither irrationalist- because it sees certain patterns of development and takes them seriously- nor is it rationalist in the Hegelian sense because it emphasizes the creative possibilities for action. Thus, it has this chance of flexibility and self-correction.³

Theoretically, Lochman is right. He employs the Early Marx to unmask the distortion of existing Marxism. Practically, his analysis may prove valid because the event of 1968 in Czechoslovakia- democratization- is the best evidence of it. But the experience of Czechoslovakia is an unique example among socialist countries which cannot be generalized from it. Moreover, Marxist rigid dogmatism is

2. J.M.Lochman, "Marxism, Liberalism and Religion: An East European Perspective." In: *Marxism and Radical Religion*, ed. J.C.Rain (Philadelphia:Fortress, 1970), p.16.

3. Ibid., pp.17-18.

much stronger than its philosophy of praxis. It is what really happens in other socialist countries as well as in Czechoslovakia both before and after the Dubcek's government.

In a communist regime, the monopoly of truth is another expression of its tendency towards totalitarianism, that is, its atheistic ideology and materialistic ideology. But Lochman does not think that an ideology is the sum of human reality or that man can be explained by ideology. An atheist ideological programme in a communist society does not directly lead to an atheist society just as a Christian programme does not create a Christian society. Thus, Lochman does not look at the future of the Church under communist rule with pessimism, or does not regard such rule as a tragedy. Moreover, he rejects any attempt to use the existence of totalitarianism or atheism as part of the weapons of propaganda in the Cold War against communism.

Lochman's experience of a socialist society is mainly recorded in the chapter "*The face of a Socialist Society*" in his book "*Church in a Marxist Society*". He evaluates the communist rule in his country at three levels. Economically, he acknowledges that there is no problem of poverty in the Czech society. There is no bitter poverty in the absolute sense. That means that there is no one really hungry or undernourished. What is perhaps more important, there is no acute problem of relative poverty such as exists in some of the richest countries of the world- even in the United States, for example.⁴ But he criticizes the Socialist Government for failing to develop the socialist economy into an effective and efficient system, and for failing to overcome a tendency towards bureaucratic rigidity in its

4. Ibid., p.14.

management. Politically, he considers that the monopoly of power was conceived in an emergency as an instrument of revolutionary change, especially, during the time of chaos. He argues how difficult it was to achieve meaningful political and social change if everybody said what they wanted. He agrees with Marxists that Marxism has always been sensitive to and has criticized this ambiguity of the abstract conception of freedom. It has said that after the socialist revolution, democratic freedom became concrete and effective.⁵ But Lochman does not conceal that the political trends in Czechoslovakia from the early 1950s onwards had fallen into the temptation of absolutized and eternalized power, that is, the citizens of the socialist country very often became objects rather than subjects of political decisions. Culturally, he notes that the national health service was improved and medical care was unconditionally at the disposal of all citizens. Moreover, the educational system was opened up to everyone and was free of charge at all its levels. But its failure was its too rigid conception of the cultural revolution and its monopoly of truth.

In this situation, the question is: Should Marxism be defended at all cost, or should the theologians rather examine their conscious and subconscious prejudices in the light of the biblical vision in order to gain a new freedom not only *in* the new society but also *for* that society? Certainly, the answer of Lochman is the latter. But how can he theologically reflect on the Church's situation in a socialist society?

In the chapter "*Christians in Unexpected Places*" in his book "*Church in a Marxist society*", Lochman gave some examples of possible

5. "Marxism, Liberalism and Religion: An East European Perspective." In: *Marxism and Radical Religion*, p.26.

Christian witness which had been taken place. At the same time, he also noted the suffering and the unjust treatment of Christians by the Czechoslovak Communist Government. In spite of this, Lochman accepted that the present mistrust of the Christian in a socialist society was a judgment on the Church's short-comings with respect to the issues of social justice in the past. The traditional debt of the churches was very deep. He identified himself with Hromadka's thinking that the Church needed repentance. He explained that

repentance is not passively, but patient, self-critical effort to overcome mistrust and to work towards opening up communication between our church and society.⁶

Besides, Lochman understood that the Church in a socialist society was at the end of the Constantinian era. That meant that the Church ceased to be part and parcel of the cultural and social establishment. The Church was no longer one of the official pillars of society and no longer enjoyed either official privileges or a generally accepted position within the structures of society which would automatically enable it to influence the world around it. On the one hand, Lochman welcomed the ruins of the Constantinian structures of Christianity because in the course of history sometimes the Church had been a hindrance to the very message which it was called to spread, and thus to its own cause. On the other hand, he urged the Church to take its minority position seriously. The Church was really a sect- a section, and a small part of the world. He employed Visser't Hooft's phrase "*Socratic evangelism*"-to describe the mission of the Church, especially in a communist context. That is to say,

Christians no longer act as those who know everything better or who know all the truth, but as those who *help* to find truth, as mid-wives. This is a humble service. But a promising and meaningful one - both from the New Testament point of view [one has only to think of the central New Testament images: the narrow path, the salt of the earth,

6. J.M.Lochman, "Radical Secularity and Radical Grace." In: *Theological Crossings*, ed. Alan Peerman (Grand Rapid:Eerdmans, 1971), p.66.

the leaven in the loaf] *and* from the point of view of empirical experience.⁷

Unlike Hromadka, for one, Lochman's approach to communism is seldom based on its relationship to a historical situation. It cannot be found in Lochman's writings that communism in Czechoslovakia is the result of historical development and that it is historically justified. This difference can be explained in that Lochman was only 26 years old during the historical change of 1948. As a young theologian, it was understandable that he did not make any theological statement concerning the February event. Further, his theological writings first appeared publicly in 1958 [as far as I know]. During the late 1950s in comparison with the late 1940s, the issue of the justification of communism was no longer an urgent issue once communism had spread beyond the Soviet Union. The Cold War with the need for international reconciliation had become the crucial issue, and this occupied a great part of Lochman's early writings. Secondly, Lochman was unlike Hromadka in the way he evaluated Czechoslovak communism. Lochman gave both positive and negative comments on it rather than a one-sided picture [although his criticism might be still regarded as too conservative in comparison with the criticism made by the churches in Latin America towards their governments.] But it should be remembered that Lochman's response was largely made and written in 1968 and after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and at a time he was absent from Prague. Also, the internal political atmosphere in the mid 1960s was quite different from the 1940s. It could be said that the chief effort of Hromadka in the 1940s and 1950s was to convince the world that communism was not a threat or a danger to mankind and to encourage Christians to co-operate constructively with the Communist Government, whilst the chief effort of Lochman in the 1960s was, on the one hand, to continue and interpret Hromadka's

7. Ibid., p.218.

work and ideal in a new situation, and on the other hand to encourage the existing established communist regime to work for humanization. These positions do not contradict each other but rather they supplement each other.

C. His theological emphases

During the February event in 1948, Lochman was only 26 years old. It could be said that it was the time and the context in which Lochman formulated his theology. Comparatively speaking, his theological writings in Prague are not so rich in quality and quantity as in Basle. It can be easily understood that the political atmosphere of Prague and Basle are completely different. That is also why his theological emphasis is quite different in Prague and in Basle. But one thing is similar, that Lochman's theological emphasis is contextual, that is, his theology is a response to the world. Lochman considers that an appropriate theology in a changing world is a theology of Exodus, of dialogue, and of change. That means that

in its *form*, it is a biblical theology, the thought of the Exodus, concerned about God's commitment to man in history, trying in thought and action to interpret this commitment into the perplexities of history and society today. In its *approach*, it is a theology of dialogue- the dialectical thought of pilgrims who do not claim ready-made dogmas and blueprints but who think and live as Socratic evangelists, in honest give and take with their fellow pilgrims. In a *social perspective*, it is a theology of the Kingdom and of its righteousness, challenging all the justice and injustice of human laws and orders and opening the possibilities for creative change.¹

I take this as the point of departure to understand and assess his theological emphases in Prague, that is, 1). the christological concentration, 2). theology and society, 3). the importance of eschatology and 4). the transideological emphasis.

The Christological Concentration

In 1958, Lochman had already stated that

it is always and above all Christology which provides the decisive criterion of Christian thinking.²

1. J.M.Lochman, *Church in a Marxist Society* (London:SCM, 1970), p.115.
2. J.M.Lochman, "The Problem of Realism in R.Niebuhr's Christology." In: *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol.11 (1958), p.254.

In 1969, he also claimed:

My pilgrimage was not a turning away from christological concentration but rather an attempt to elaborate and realize some of the implications integral to christology.³

Thus, it is clear that Christology is his theological point of departure. But under a socialist society, how does he interpret Christology? And how is the christological concentration important and relevant in a socialist society?

Basically, Lochman understands that incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the unconditional "YES" of the Gospel. God takes sides with the world, takes its guilt upon Himself and says His gracious "YES" to the world. This "YES" means that the power of the Lord is neither a magical-absolute nor a mere rule over inanimate or resisting objects by virtue of a greater force, but rather the personal power of redeeming surrender, of serving love and of reconciliation. Shedding light from this, God's commandments are the expression of a positive love of God towards man. This is his point of departure to understand the Gospel. It is also a call to the Church having an unconditional devotion and love towards man.

If Christology is understood in the sense of authorizing theocracy and ecclesiocracy or justifying the dictatorial structures and claims of Christian civilization, then the "*Lordship of Jesus Christ*" is seriously challenged in a communist context. But at the end of the Constantinian era, Lochman understands and interprets the Lordship of Jesus Christ from the classical passage, Phil.2:5-11 as follows: The "Lordship" of the Son of God is not upholding ecclesiocratic claims but as demanding unconditional solidarity with

3. J.M.Lochman, "Radical Secularity and Radical Grace." In: *Theological Crossings*, ed. Alan Peerman (Grand Rapid:Eerdmans, 1971), p.70.

all men, as Servanthood. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. The path of the Son of God which led to the emptying of himself is the path of his Lordship.⁴ Lochman explains that this is the secularization of God in Jesus Christ.

This secularization of God is not to be identified with historical secularizing process, though for a Christian the former cannot be neatly separated from the latter. The radical commitment of the Son of God to the world of man frees us to follow up, to serve and to change this secular world in His name.⁵

It is the call of God to the Church to move within the movement of its Lord and to give up its own opposite, and egocentric path. It is the pro-existence of the Church. Practically, that means the relationship between the Church and a communist government should not exist as a struggle in the sense of ecclesiocracy, that is, in the control of schools and hospitals, rather it should be in terms of service and love. Lochman holds that

on the ruins of the Constantinian structures, the New Testament good news of Jesus Christ might be liberated from its theocratic captivity and thus be understood again in its authenticity as the good news of the Lord who is the servant- the servant who is the Lord.⁶

It is the "*Diaconic Christocracy*"- a path of unconditional service and solidarity with the world.

Besides, Lochman considers that

as far as the New Testament is concerned, there is no doubt that a christological concentration appears not just as one of many possible concentrations, as one experiment among others, but rather as *the* concentration..... provided it is not understood as a one-sided and sectarian christomonism but in its broad trinitarian context.⁷

4. *Church in a Marxist Society*, p.134.

5. "Radical Secularity and Radical Grace." In: *Theological Crossings*, p.71.

6. *Church in a Marxist Society*, p.134.

7. J.M.Lochman, "Toward a Theology of Christological Concentration." In: *The Context of Contemporary Theology*, ed. Alexander Makelway (Georgia:John Knox, 1974), pp.220-221.

He finds that the christological concentration is more comprehensive and inclusive than the First and the Third articles' approach, especially in a socialist society. Firstly and biblically, the indivisible centre of the New Testament confession and thought is "*exclusively*" Jesus Christ, and that other statements of faith can now be made "*inclusively*" on the basis of this concern. Secondly and comprehensively, it offers a better chance of a fruitful dialogue. Facing Marxist's atheism, both the transcendence and the immanence of God in Jesus Christ is an important point of encounter with them. Further, the christological concentration can be accessible to all dimensions of life, such as, history and society, alienation and reconciliation, which are so tremendously important for the development of a true humanity. Thirdly and practically, it helps the Church to withstand the crisis into which is thrown at the end of the Constantinian era. It is because the Servanthood of Christ helps the Church to surmount the ghetto's temptation and to realize the unjustifiable resentment against the changing tide of history. It also helps at the times when society is deeply convulsed to guide and comfort the congregations of Jesus Christ.

The unconditional "YES" of the Gospel and the servanthood of Christ of Lochman's theology are not purely theological issue, but rather a reflection in a communist context of the way in which the Church is separated from society and even is antagonistic to Marxists.

Church and Society

Lochman rejects any temptation to interpret the Gospel only in the religious sense. That means that the Gospel only concerns the Other World and personal salvation which has nothing in common with worldly concern. Lochman stresses that the Church is responsible for

the whole world and the whole of humanity. Here, like Hromadka, he rejects the Lutheran teaching of two realms, and especially, its later development into dogma. In his article "*Historical Events and Ethical Decisions*", he renounces resolutely both extreme views of history. On the one hand, this means that history is a divine revelation which calls for a corresponding attitude, an attitude of "*faith*"; and on the other hand, history is irrelevant to theology, and is only in the power of reason and judgment which "*faith*" has nothing to do with it. Lochman argues that

we are living in the penultimate and should think and argue accordingly [i.e. rationally]. But we believe in the ultimate; amid all the relativities of historical events, amid all logical considerations, our faith is not dumb. Whenever we encounter man, there faith must speak. This does not mean that reason is simply excluded. In this respect it is not a choice of either faith or reason; nor is it a question of choosing between "human confusion" and "divine providence". On the contrary, faith calls for *logical thought*; but it is *faith* which calls. Faith is not neutral; it is "partial."⁸

There is no clear cut distinction between faith and reason in facing ethical decisions. Indeed, Lochman's view is profoundly rooted in his christological concentration. History is the place where Jesus Christ accepts human failures in complete solidarity with man, in which Jesus becomes man's contemporary and dwells among men. Moreover, Lochman justifies his view by saying that

the Bible is well acquainted with "human confusion", with history as the sphere of human freedom and human guilt. But in defiance of all this confusion the Bible attests its firm faith in the omnipotence of God, even in history. God has not abandoned history..... Christian lives in history. He regards human confusion quite soberly. He believes quite soberly in God's providence.⁹

That is why Lochman suggests that ethics cannot exist at all apart from their historical setting; ethics cannot be divorced from time.¹⁰ Then, the immediate question to be posed to Lochman is: How does

8. J.M. Lochman, "Historical Events and Ethical Decisions." In: *Theology Today*, Vol. 21 (1963), p. 213.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 212.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

theology respond to the world without losing its own independence? Or is the danger to tailor theology by adapting it to the new situation and ideology when historical events play a decisive role in ethical decisions?

In his book *"Reconciliation and Liberation"*, Lochman states clearly that

if we mean by this slogan [*the world provides our agenda*] that theology and the Church must be prepared to accept themes and criteria dictated by views prevalent in the "market" at any given time, then the countenancing of such directives whether from "right" or "left"- with flirtatious side glances either at the conservative market or the progressive one- would encourage an illegitimate "affiliation" and shortlived "alliance", a deliberate or unconscious "sell out" of the very substance of the faith. But another way is also open to us, one which shows genuine theological respect for "the world's agenda": theologians and Christians will examine the actual social and cultural situation at a given moment and develop theology and its themes not in isolation from that situation but in dialogue with their contemporaries..... A relevant theology- one which is related to and measured by the Gospel- is practised within a particular temporal horizon. For the Gospel, because it is witness to the Incarnate Word, made flesh in the concrete historical person and life of Jesus of Nazareth, is itself a concrete historical truth with contemporary relevance.¹¹

Lochman's understanding of the relationship between historical events and ethical decisions is never an easy adaptation of theology, but like Hromadka's slogan, that is, "*taking history seriously*".

Lochman's emphasis on worldly responsibility brings Christians both in a socialist society and in the "free" world to re-examine their roles and ethical decisions. Lochman insists that

it is our unique opportunity entrusted to us here and now. We have no other. And it is also the scene of our vocation, the actual scene of our concrete responsibility, the only one we have, in which we must either acquit ourselves of our vocation or fall.¹²

11. J.M. Lochman, *Reconciliation and Liberation*, trans. David Lewis (Belfast: Christian Journal, 1980), pp.120-121.

12. "Historical Events and Ethical Decisions." In: *Theology Today*, p.214.

"Here and now" is the place where Christians live, and where Christians witness. Christians live in *this* society. And for this world, in which the disciples of Jesus Christ truly belonged, Jesus died and rose. Certainly Lochman is clear that the situation of the Church in a communist society is one in which the Church is forced into a ghetto by the society, but it should never be an excuse to accept it passively. On the contrary, the Church should mould the world actively.

During the era of the Cold War, firstly, Lochman rejects any dualistic concept of the Gospel; that is, that human history is a struggle between angels and demons. He writes: "In the dualistic curtailment of its claim, the Gospel is ejected from certain spheres of Christian responsibility. Thus are the forces of Cold War not only tolerated by the Church, but in the name of 'Christian realism' also religiously justified."¹³ Secondly, he claims that the Christian's position in history must never be turned into absolute, that is, "*the*" Christian view. In addition, the political differences should never be put into religious or metaphysical fronts. He suggests that Christians must be ready for genuine encounter and conversation with people in different situations instead of a one-sided judgment and criticism. During the 1968 democratization in Czechoslovakia, Lochman fully encouraged Christians to support the movement for democratic socialism. For him, historical events and ethical decisions are closely bound together. The world is neither divine nor demonic, but it is the place where God places the Church to be His witness.

13. J.M.Lochman, "Theology in an Era of Cold War." In: *Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia*, Vol.VII (1960), p.58.

The importance of eschatology

In the tradition of the Bohemian Reformation, Lochman considers that eschatology has far-reaching meanings for Christians, especially in a communist context. Lochman discusses the meanings of Christian hope on three levels, in the light of Revelation 21:1-7. In a political level, he explains that the word "city" used in Revelation 21:1 in Greek is "*polis*". He employs it as the political dimension in the expectation of salvation. He justifies his view by saying that the Messianic hope of Israel means, not the individual, but the people of God, and from that ultimately, the peoples of the earth. And in the message of Jesus, the coming reality of God is also expressed with a political concept: the Kingdom of God.¹⁴ Thus, the biblical hope is neither to betray the earth nor merely to comfort the soul. On the contrary, Lochman notes that the promise in the Bible, especially, in the Beatitudes, is an encouragement to and a duty of Christians to get involved in the future. Lochman understands that Christian hope is politically concerned and oriented. It can never be reduced simply to self-care religion. The New Jerusalem has something to do with the fate of the poor and the under-privileged in those cities.¹⁵ In a theological level, Christian hope cannot be identified with any earthly cities. Therefore, no earthly power or principality can be regarded as an absolute without any challenge. Simultaneously, Christian hope regards man not as living in a straitjacket or a once and for all given situation, but as living in an open perspective. Man is more than what he has in his own hands, and more than who he is. Lochman believes that only before God, man can be truly and certainly a subject, the irreplaceable and unique child of God.¹⁶ In a personal level, Christian hope takes man's personal life, and human

14. J.M.Lochman, *Encountering Marx*, trans. Edwin Robertson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), p.120.

15. Ibid., p.122.

16. Ibid., p.127.

destiny in the world seriously. Lochman claims that the ultimate future will not be indifferent to any area of one's suffering, one's activity and one's experience.¹⁷ Furthermore, it is the hope which conquers death.

Lochman's interpretation of Christian hope challenges both Christians and Marxists within a socialist society. For Christians, Christian hope reminds them that firstly, they should take the world seriously because it is the place where Christian witness must be present. Lochman realizes that

eschatology is not simply history, and history is not simply eschatology. But the light of eschatology illumines faith in history and compels us to shape it accordingly, to decipher the signs of the time and to do what is necessary here and now. Thus the Christian ethic, because it is eschatology, is defined related to history..... It is here and now that we have to fulfill the commandments of the living God.¹⁸

Secondly, Christian hope comforts Christians both individually and corporately under unjust treatment. The world is under the sovereignty of God, therefore, God takes an individual's suffering in history seriously. Corporately speaking, the world is never pre-determined and pre-ordained, and man's future is not fatalism. In contrast, the world can be transformed and challenged. This removes the extreme understanding of idealism, and opens the future with responsibility.

For Marxists, Christian hope promotes the development of the Christian-Marxist dialogue. Firstly, it eliminates the predisposition of the Marxist's critique of religion. That means that religion [Christianity] is not often what Marx said is to dull the people to realize the real needs of changing society or to provide an illusion

17. Ibid., p.130.

18. "Historical Events and Ethical Decisions." In: *Theology Today*, p.215.

for the people to escape from reality. Secondly, it stimulates Marxists to re-consider their understanding of transcendence. That means that they need to re-examine their interpretation of man solely in terms of materialism and re-evaluate their concept of God. Thirdly, it challenges the Marxist's idea of historical determinism. Because man's future is open, therefore, no one can claim that they hold the key to explain the process towards future. Fourthly, it marks the point of encounter because Christians and Marxists are both future-oriented.

Christian hope, which Lochman stressed is placed outside of man, does not rest on man's own powers of conscious of experience or person or work. But it relies on the grace of God. Being a church is to hold the office of the guardian of hope both in pastoral care and in politics.

In a speech concerning "*The Church and Society*" delivered on July 22, 1966, Lochman considered that the service of the Church in a communist society was

to keep the view towards the future wide open amidst all the troubles and depressions of Church and society. In other words, the Church helps to create and sustain a climate in which true changes are possible and meaningful.¹⁹

That was the service of hope. After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Lochman's understanding of Christian hope underwent a profound change. He said resolutely that the basic contribution of the distinctively Christian tradition was

an opening up of history as a meaningful process, a breakthrough of all mythological or, as they are sometimes called ontocratic structures. By this are meant those

19. J.M.Lochman, "The Church and Society." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.IX (1966), p.219.

models of thought which consider the universe as closed sacred, established in itself.²⁰

Further, he explained the Exodus as a way to challenge the preordained structures and the established orders. He rejected the idea of absolutism of power, fatalism, and any realism which accepted the given status quo as unchangeable. He asserted that

the transcending Kingdom is seen precisely in its dynamic relationship to men in history. The biblical God does not encourage any escapism. He is not an abstract transcendence, aloof from all secular concerns. On the contrary, he is the God involved in history, opening new possibilities, the God of open future. He is all this in a concretely articulated way: his basic revelation in the Old Testament— an event of liberation. His basic revelation in the New Testament is the way of Jesus of Nazareth: his unconditional solidarity with men, particularly with those who are oppressed and poor. Thus, this is the way of his Kingdom, this is the way for man.²¹

Lochman considered that reality was the challenge of the coming Kingdom of God, and man's response to that challenge in the search for greater freedom and justice.²² Facing the Soviet invasion, the fall of the Dubcek's government, and the so-called "*Normalization*", he insisted firstly that the Church should continue to strive for a better and more humanized society because the Gospel was an event of exodus; secondly, he urged the Church not to be pessimistic because the future was boundless. What practical approaches did he suggest the Church should take? This was an open-ended question because Lochman left Czechoslovakia at the end of August, 1968.

The Transideological Emphasis

According to Lochman, a transideological emphasis is to take one's ideological orientation seriously. By "taking seriously" he means examining one's ideology in depth in order to understand its

20. J.M.Lochman, "Marxism, Liberalism, and Religion: An East European Perspective." In: *Marxism and Radical Religion*, ed. J.C.Rain (Philadelphia:Fortress, 1970), p.21.

21. Ibid., pp.22-23.

22. Ibid., p.24.

thoughts and its historical bound rather than taking it superficially. It is also a call to understand the Gospel more thoroughly rather than partially. Lochman discusses the transideological emphases within a communist context under two headings, namely, the ideological struggle and the atheistic struggle.

Historically, Christian churches are engaged in confrontation with ideology because they regard ideology as a serious threat to the concrete existence of human beings. But Lochman questions whether such kinds of ideological battle employed by Christians are justifiable. He writes:

This transcendence is denied and set at naught and the sovereignty is lost. It is regarded as an ideology, if theology either apologetically or aggressively puts it on to the same level as other ideologies, if it becomes an ideology set against other ideologies..... Jesus Christ who is the salvation of the whole man becomes a mere principle of human understanding, the Lord, who is the saviour of all men becomes a partisan in an ideological battle.²³

In the examination of ideology, Lochman warns the Church to be aware firstly of the fact that ideology is a function of man. Ideology is man's response to the world. It is part of human reality and an element of human life. Secondly, ideology is not totally negative. For instance, Marxist ideology is expressed in a social construction which leads man out of his blind tutelage and integrates man into the new society. Thus, Lochman holds that the Gospel must remain the good news which breaks any ideological spell, pertains to the ideological sphere, and leaves faith free to integrate ideology, instead of erasing it. Facing the Marxist tendency towards absolutism and exclusiveness in ideology, he considers that the dialectical service of theology should challenge this temptation, not by taking an anti-

23. "Theology in an Era of Cold War." In: *Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia*, p.55.

ideological attitude but rather by taking a critical and constructive participating attitude.

Christians frequently understand atheism in religious terms, that is, as inhuman, untrustworthy, immoral and demonic. This leads to unnecessary misunderstandings and creates a crusading spirit. Lochman considers that atheism often emerges in the course of the life of faith as a not yet or a no more of believing.²⁴ Atheism is something secondary, only a reply and a reaction. Marxist atheism is rather a reply to the unfaithfulness and guilt of the established church. Furthermore, unfaith does not endanger God because the Gospel is higher than atheism and not in competition with it. Lochman realizes that there is plenty of evidence for the criticism made by Marxists who do not grasp what the essence of the Gospel is. That is that they see the Church only as a social phenomenon and institution and see nothing behind it; that is, spiritual life. On the other hand, the Church should share their misunderstandings because it meets materialist atheism on an inappropriate level, that is, as a partisan of philosophical idealism. He writes:

Only when this Christian "no" to materialism as a system does not sound from a prior idealistic decision but from a deep understanding for the basic core of its emphasis, genuine concern for the material world and for the material needs of man—which truly biblical thinking can well understand, only then is this "no" to atheism does not sound in the spirit of a counter-front, but in a Christian identification even with our unbelieving brother, only then is this false wall of partition broken down and the way is opened up for a genuine meeting and face to face witness to the atheists.²⁵

Further, the Bible's major concern is idolatry rather than atheism. Therefore, the Gospel should be preached in the spirit of pro-existence, not in the spirit of Law. Lochman claimed that the Gospel

24. *Church in a Marxist Society*, p.159.

25. "Theology in an Era of Cold war." In: *Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia*, p.55.

is a call to give up every self-justification and to understand other men's needs and concerns, and it is for atheists rather than against atheists.

His transideological emphasis is principally based on the truest and deepest understanding of the Gospel. It is an inclusive Gospel rather than an excommunicating law. It is in this Gospel that the solidarity of Jesus includes even those who are estranged from him. In the light of St. Paul's doctrine that Christ died for the ungodly (Rom.5:6), Lochman is convinced of the profound relevance of Christianity for atheists, as well as for believers. The Gospel breaks through all man-made barriers. Man is more important than what "ism" he holds or what "ist" he is. Indeed, Lochman's understanding of the priority of the Gospel is deeply rooted in his christological concentration.

After a careful survey of Lochman's theological reflection in a communist context, I find that his theology follows the path of- what he said before- theology of exodus, of dialogue and of change. Because of his involvement in Christian-Marxist dialogue and with ecumenical circles characterized by a social dimension of faith, these helped him to do theology on this path. He successfully combines theology and ethics. Ethics apart from theology misses the depth of the Christian life because it fails to connect the project of living with a faithful and truthful vision. Theology apart from ethics misses the vitality of Christian faith because it fails to connect the task of believing with a faithful and truthful form of life. Lochman's achievement is to avoid either one of these weaknesses.

D. Discussion

From the above discussion of Lochman's theological emphases, we note that Lochman's theology largely follows the lines of J.L.Hromadka and Karl Barth. D.Bonhoeffer and the experience of the Confessing Church also has a certain influence on Lochman. From Lochman's theological writings, it is obvious that there are several common themes which are paralleled in Bonhoeffer's theology. For instance, there is a counterpart between Bonhoeffer's concept of "*Christ and the World come of age*" and Lochman's understanding of "*The Lordship of Christ in a secularized world*"; Bonhoeffer's emphasis on "*Christ-the Man for others*" and Lochman's interpretation of "*The Diaconic Christocracy*"; Bonhoeffer's idea of "*Here and Now*" and Lochman's thought of "*Historical Events and Ethical Decisions*"; Bonhoeffer's understanding of "*We are living in the penultimate- we believe in the ultimate*" and Lochman's eschatological emphasis.

Moreover, Lochman found the experience of the Confessing Church quite helpful to the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren(ECCB) because their respective contexts were not dissimilar. They both lived in ideologically hostile environments. In the article "*Two Temptations Confronting the Church*"¹, Lochman opposed both the temptation of adaptation, which lost theological sovereignty and simply tailored the Gospel to a new situation and ideology, and the temptation of clear-cut "No" to the historical development, which saw the threat of the Constantinian era simply as a threat to the cause of Jesus Christ and consequently opposed this development to a greater or lesser degree. Certainly, it was the lesson which he learnt from the churches in Germany during the era of Hitler even though he did not

1. J.M.Lochman, *Church in a Marxist Society* (London:SCM, 1970), pp.61-68.

regard Nazism and Marxism as parallel. Generally speaking, the churches in Germany had held three different kinds of attitude towards Nazism. Firstly, there was the phenomenon of the German Christians. Secondly, there was the majority of Christians who carried on as though their faith were not challenged. Thirdly, there was the Confessing Church which held a stance against Nazism. The experience of the Confessing Church helped the ECCB to realize the temptation of being too close identification with government, and its responsibility in the world. It is true that Lochman was brought up by Bonhoeffer's theology and the experience of the Confessing Church.

Since the late 1950s, "hope" becomes a very hot theme in ecumenical circles. Lochman made a very clear distinction between Christian hope and Ernst Bloch's principles of hope. He found Bloch's interpretation of hope unacceptable because it was not only an anthropological phenomenon, but was also an ontological principle. That means that Bloch stressed that men can become as gods. Lochman considered that

if there is anything which endangers the human quality of life, it is the false absolute we ascribe to human activity and our tragic Messianic claims.²

In spite of this, Lochman acknowledged the contribution of Bloch to an understanding of "*realism*"; it is not defined simply as something to be recognized for what it is but is openness toward the new, and the not-yet character of being. Concerning Bloch's understanding, Lochman noted that he left out two essential concepts. Firstly, there was the concept of God. Lochman stressed that God did not mean the other side of the world or the philosophical idea, but He is the God who acts and is involved in history even today. Secondly, Bloch paid little attention to the "*Alpha*" of biblical faith- the doctrine of creation.

2. J.M.Lochman, *Encountering Marx*, trans. Edwin Robertson (Philadelphia:Fortress, 1977), p.114.

Because of the doctrine of creation, Lochman argued that the world stopped short of being an absolute cosmos. Lochman wrote:

[The infallible hope of the biblical perspective] is seen not as the property of the divided possibilities of the world, but as the promise of the Kingdom of God. This is the unconditional gift of the loving-kindness of God to the world and to men, rooted in Christ.³

Hope and God were inseparable: To be without God in the world meant to be without hope, Lochman claimed. Within a communist context, I find that Lochman successfully interpreted Christian hope in a meaningful way. He gave a balance of consolation and responsibility, transcendence and immanence. More importantly, he rejected any fatalism in the light of Christian hope. Lochman affirmed resolutely that

the biblical hope is clearly bound up with the vision of transcendent grace, the final redemption from our works and our failures, the victory over the last enemy which is sin and death.⁴

Like Hromadka, Lochman's theology is a contextual theology. His theological emphases are closely related to his concrete situation. For instance, in a socialist context he understands Christology in the sense of servanthood rather than in the sense of privileged kingship; he understands eschatology in political and theological dimensions, rather than understanding it as an extreme form of a personal dimension. In his book *"Social Context of Theology"*, Robin Gill notes that a good theology must be responsive. It must take the social determinants of theological positions, the social significance of theological positions and the social context of theology seriously.⁵ Hromadka also writes that theology which does not touch on the objective acts of God in history and above history becomes an escape and loses its effectiveness, urgency, comprehensibility, and

3. Ibid., p.116.

4. Ibid., p.109.

5. Robin Gill, *Social Context of Theology* (London: Mowbrays, 1973), p.6.

aggressive hopefulness in the time of today and tomorrow.⁶ "*The world provides our agenda*" is the approach of Lochman's doing theology. His theological work is not a purely academic professional approach but it grows out of the life of the Church, its mission, its needs and its struggles.

Basically, Lochman's theology follows what may be called the "*Prague-line theology*" which traces its root back to the Bohemian Reformation. This theology holds a positive understanding of Marxism-humanist aspect- and stresses the "YES" of the Gospel to the world and the social involvement of the Church. Despite being positive to Marxism, Lochman was not so one-sided as Hromadka. It seems to me that Lochman's theology is comparatively more practical in context and more personal in address than Hromadka. For instance, Lochman talked about the "*Civilian Proclamation*" [*Zivile Verkundigung*] and "*Humanization in a Socialist Society*" [which will be discussed in Chapter Three], and shared the unjust treatment of Christians by the Government in his writings which Hromadka seldom did. It is understandable because, firstly, the political atmosphere in the 1960s was less tense than in the 1950s so that Lochman could write these comparatively provoking articles. Secondly, Hromadka retired as the Dean of the Comenius Faculty in 1964 and was still active in Christian circles, but his writings were comparatively fewer than previous years. Thirdly, the recovery of the Early Marx was the time in which Lochman's writings appeared publicly. The emphasis given by this recovery eliminated to a certain extent the antagonism and misunderstandings between Christians and Marxists. If I make a comparison between these two theologians, I find that the path which Hromadka followed was to examine and analyze the world situation, and

6. J.L.Hromadka, "The Responsibility and Hopes of a Theologian."
In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.V (1962), p.86.

explain it to the Church; while Lochman, because of the pioneering work of Hromádka, directed his efforts to an explanation of how the Church should respond to the world. This emphasis is only relative and supplementary with each other.

In the late 1950s and the early 1960s, Lochman talked about theology in an era of Cold War. In the mid 1960s, he spoke about the "*Civilian Proclamation*". In the late 1960s, he wrote about social theology in a revolutionary age. On August 29, 1968, Lochman left Czechoslovakia. It was a loss to theology. What I mean is that if he stayed in Czechoslovakia after 1968, we might have seen how his theological reflection would have faced a new era.

CHAPTER THREE

CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN A COMMUNIST CONTEXT

After the event of February 1948, Czechoslovakia became a socialist state. The Communist Government held firmly that the abolition of religion was a prerequisite for the real happiness of the people. No matter whether or not it followed Lenin's advice, such a direct assault would only lead to greater religious resistance, or it adopted Stalin's way of actively suppressing religion, the extermination of religion would remain its ultimate goal. How, then, under this hostile situation, did the Church respond to the Government and fulfill its mission? What theological standpoints should be made and emphasized in this situation? How did Hromadka and Lochman lead the Church to face this new situation? In this chapter, I will attempt to deal with these questions.

A. Church-State relations

The church here referred to is the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren [ECCB]. Both Hromadka and Lochman were ministers of the ECCB. The ECCB was formed in 1918 from the union of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions, and it traced its root back to the 15th century, the beginning of the church reform movement in Bohemia associated with Jan Hus. It was affiliated to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The ECCB was the third largest non-Catholic church in Czechoslovakia. In 1965, its members were about 282,000, about 2% of the whole population. Even though it was small, it was influential in Czechoslovakia in a large measure because of the work of Hromadka.¹

1. Details of the ECCB can be read in *Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia* [1954-1964] and *Ecumenical Information from Czechoslovakia* [1965-1970]. Both were published by the Ecumenical Council of Churches of Czechoslovakia.

The Communist Party after it came into power, promulgated the New Constitution of June 1948. It was based upon the Old Constitution of February 1920, but was in the spirit of a "*People's Democratic Institution*". That meant that in economic matters, the former order was replaced by a socialist one; the cultural and educational systems were put under state control; personal property rights were restricted; personal freedom was limited by the passing of new laws; and ecclesiastical matters were regulated as follows:

Everybody is entitled to avow, in private as well as in public, any religious faith, or to be without confession at all. All religionists and atheists are equal before the law.

Everybody is free to practise his religion, or to be without confession. Its practice, however, must not be discordant with public order or with good morals. It is not advisable to misuse the right for non-religious purposes.²

Theoretically and in principle, the New Constitution guaranteed equality between religious people and atheists before law, and the right to profess any religion or no religion. In practice, however, the Constitution was seldom respected and frequently violated. For instance, the Government suppressed or controlled the press and religious publishing houses, nationalized all landed properties of the church, practised censorship, and imprisoned clergymen.³

Before the new church law was passed, the ECCB unanimously passed a resolution stating:

The Church must guard its freedom and its independence, not only in spiritual but in administrative and material matters..... We are grateful for the support accorded up to now to the Church by the State. We ask that the system of endowments [under which the State has until now helped to cover in part the expenses of the Church] be continued for a

2. Ludvik Nemec, "The Czechoslovak Heresy and Schism." In: *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol.65 (1975), pp.69-70.
3. David B.Barrett ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Oxford University Press, 1982), pp.260-261.

transitional period; that the Church should not be required to submit candidates for the pastorate only with previous consent of the State authorities; and that even in future it should collect voluntary contributions from its members and dispose of them as it sees fit. If this request by the Church is unfavourably received, we consider that the only thing for our Church to do is to resolve, humbly, and trusting in God's help, to refuse, in such a situation, all assistance offered by the State.....⁴

Even though the ECCB presented its opinions and objections to the State, five new church laws were eventually passed on October 14, 1949. They were as follows: Firstly, the Federal Office of State for Ecclesiastical Affairs within the Ministry of Culture was established. Its purpose was to watch over ecclesiastical and religious life and to see whether it developed in harmony with the Constitution and the principles of the Socialist Government; that is, to assure that each citizen had the freedom of religion guaranteed by the Constitution, and that there was juridical equality for all denominations. Secondly, because of the confiscation of the Church's properties, the State compensated the Church by taking up the responsibility of paying the stipends of the priests, clergymen and preachers of all churches and religious groups without any distinction. Thirdly, a priest and preacher needed the approval of the State for their activity. Fourthly, it abolished all the rules regulating the legal situation of the churches. Fifthly, priests had to be persons loyal to the demands of the state and were required to take an oath of loyalty.⁵

The new church law caused the churches in Czechoslovakia great difficulties, especially the Roman Catholic Church. This was partly because of its negative position towards communism, and partly because of its wealth and riches from its former link with the Hapsburg dynasty even in the First Republic. It became a target of attack by the Government. In contrast, the Government regarded the Protestant

4. *Ecumenical Press Service*, October 22, 1948, p.269.

5. David B.Barrett ed., p.260.

churches [7% of the total population] as too small and fragmented to constitute any threat to its authority. Furthermore, the Protestant churches were used to holding a minority position in Czech history. Therefore, comparatively speaking, they had little to lose whatever kind of government came to power. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church⁶, the ECCB accepted it passively, although reluctantly.

After the new church law was issued, Hromadka wrote an article "*On the Threshold of a New Era*"⁷. In his article, Hromadka did not comment on the new church law specifically, but wrote:

The representatives of the State gave a solemn assurance that the laws should ensure the churches, in order that "they might freely and fully develop their activity and thus concentrate on their religious and moral mission from which they were in the past led away by their material worries." That is what the Government claims as its motivation. Whoever took part in the closing discussions on the law in the Church commission of the Central Action Committee of the National Front will remember the impressive words of the state minister Dr. A.Cepicka, who repeatedly stressed the interest of the builders of the State in the Church and in religion as an important element of human society. "We want living churches!" "We want them to grow!"⁸

Furthermore, he commented that

we Christians are convinced that the most excellent and best in communist endeavours is deeply rooted in the Biblical message about God, the defender of the widows and orphans, of the poor and oppressed, and in the apostolic messages

6. The Roman Catholic Church issued a statement concerning the new church law:
 - a. Concerning an oath of loyalty, it added, "Provided that this is not in conflict with the natural rights of man."
 - b. Concerning the new salaries, it suggested the clergy declare, "I have accepted the newly-regulated salary because it is an ordinance which has gained legal validity. By accepting this salary, however, I am not taking upon myself any obligation which would be in conflict with my priestly conscience and with church laws. I declare again that the spiritual interests of the church and the undisturbed freedom of my priestly work are preferable to me than the material security of my existence."
- From *Ecumenical Press Service*, November 4, 1949, pp.3-4.
7. J.L.Hromadka, "On the Threshold of a New Era." In: *The Presbyterian World*, Vol.XIX (1949), pp.158-162.
8. *Ibid.*, p.160.

about Jesus Christ who came in the form of a servant in order to glorify God by the obedience of the Cross.⁹

His article perhaps gave opportunities for others to criticize him as a conformist or an opportunist because he did not seem so naive as to believe what the Government said. He was criticized for pleasing the Government rather than consoling the Church, and for being a mouthpiece of the Government rather than a prophet of the Church. It was undeniable that Hromadka favoured communism rather than the western type of democracy, but was he a hypocrite?

In the same article, Hromadka warned the churches that

One false step might drag us all down into a serious calamity..... One wrong interference and one false word can in a moment destroy everything which has been built up for years and decades.

Furthermore, he urged the Government to make its goodwill known, [that is, the motive behind the church law stated in the Central Action Committee,] because

the church congregations and the preachers will not meet the State and political authorities in the highest offices. The biggest task will arise down in the villages and towns, between the members of the churches and the local and regional committees, between the clergy and the Party officials..... We expect therefore that the State Office for Church Matters will become an instrument with which the goodwill of the builders of the State will reach the most remote places in the Republic and with which it will quickly remove the mistakes, misunderstanding, severities and injustice.¹⁰

These two statements could be understood in two ways. Firstly and historically, the atmosphere of mistrust between Christians and Marxists was deep: if Hromadka did criticize the law, it would only make the gap between them more unbridgeable. Moreover, criticism would only deepen the self-righteous spirit of the Church, at a time when it needed to repent. Thus, criticism would not only fail to improve the relationship between them but would also be an obstacle to

9. Ibid., p.161.

10. Ibid., p.161.

the possibility of reconciliation. Secondly, if the Government's motive was made public, as Hromadka wished, this could have two effects. On the one hand, it might remove the hysteria, fear, and prejudice of the Church towards the Socialist Government. On the other hand, it might create public pressure on the Government, urging it to keep its promise. The approach which Hromadka took might be considered too passive and defensive, but his goodwill was certain. His mistake was a failure to criticize *openly* the injustice that existed within the Socialist Government. His mistake was made simply because he sympathized with it.

Regarding the question of the salary of church workers which was to be paid by the State, Lochman considered that it was a residue of the Constantinian order transferred to a socialist state.¹¹ I do not think however that his interpretation is right. Fundamentally, the State was hostile to religion and its main purpose was to eliminate it. Therefore, if the fact that the salary of church workers was paid by the Government was a residue of the Constantinian order, it would totally contradict the State's official ideology. How could the Government suppress the Church on the one hand, and support it on the other hand? Furthermore, all other religious policies were in opposition to the Church, and before 1948, the Church did not receive any financial support from the Government. The only possible explanation, I believe, is that it was an instrument by which the Government hoped to gain control and enter Church affairs. It was because the Government found that the churches constituted the only organizational structure which by their very nature could not be directly dominated by the Party, and thus offered potential machinery

11. J.M.Loehman, *Church in a Marxist Society* (London:SCM, 1970), p.57-59.

for opposition as nothing else in society was permitted to do. The residue of the Constantinian order was a means rather than a cause.

Nevertheless, under the new church law, all churches were placed on equal footing with the Roman Catholic Church which until that time had been a privileged church. Under a new regime, a completely new Church-State relation had been created. The Church also needed to find an alternative way of meeting the new challenges instead of preserving the old model of Church-State relation [the Constantinian model]. The life of Christians under this new regime was harsh and difficult. Lochman called Christians in eastern Europe, at least in Czechoslovakia, Christians without privileges. Lochman's article "*Christians in an unexpected place*"¹² also reflected the extent of the hardship and unfair treatment of Christians by the State, simply because of their faith.

At the beginning, the ECCB saw socialism as a political expression of its own desire for a more just and democratic society, because the Church gave emphasis to the social dimension of salvation in the tradition of Jus Hus. It was fully revealed in a message sent by the ECCB to the West in 1953, saying:

It is hard for us to free ourselves from secular interests, on the one hand, and it is easy on the other hand to consider the pressure of events upon our political and social forms and moral conventions as an attack upon the very substance of the Church and faith. It is all the more easy as the secular and material interests have penetrated into the foundations of our sanctuary and corrupted the integrity of our faith..... The Christian countries caused the catastrophe of the two World Wars..... We are also terrified at the thought that it was the churches and power of Christian countries which for centuries have grown on the poverty and toil of poor and backward nations..... It is theologically wrong and biblically evil and worthy of condemnation, and to approach the problems of today with a condescending patience and a certain pathos of self-righteousness. The churches in the rich and powerful

12. Ibid., pp.86-100.

countries should try to awaken a desire to understand the struggle of the poor and long-exploited countries..... even though they do it with the aid of an ideology which severely criticizes Christianity.¹³

After ten years, the ECCB issued a *Rule of Church Life* in 1963 stating:

The Gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation was proclaimed to the whole world. It applies also to those who do not yet believe. The Church therefore requests and urges its members to love everyone, be reconciled by mutual forgiveness, never lose hope for anyone and pray for all. The Church requests and urges its members not to become evil under the influence of evil, but conquer the evil by goodness. The Church requests and urges its members to consider the burdens of suffering ones as their own burdens and help readily effective deeds to rectify the wrongs.

The Church requests and admonishes its members whenever they come in touch with the sins of others that they should not forget their own shortcomings and sins. It requests them, too, that they do not multiply human guilt and do not cease praying for themselves and for all that are doing wrong. The Church requests and admonishes its members, in their relationship to the state and society, to seek the peace of the people and mankind into the midst of which God has placed them.¹⁴

In the statement announced in 1963, the ECCB did not make any specific indication regarding who the wrong-doers were. Perhaps it was understood. On the one hand, it was obvious from these two statements that the ECCB was largely influenced by Hromadka in his emphasis on: the Gospel for all people, solidarity with their suffering, and the need for repentance. On the other hand, the second statement confirmed what Dr.Jiri Otter- secretary of the Synodical Council of the ECCB- wrote in 1970:

When Marxist ideology was proclaimed as the leading principle and atheism was propagated as the only valid view of life, many members [ECCB] began to mistrust communists and socialist politics.¹⁵

He did not refer to any specific time here, but his statement noted that despite the great influence of Hromadka on the ECCB, the

13. *Ecumenical Press Service*, December 18, 1953, pp.341-342.

14. Jiri Otter, *The Witness of Czech Protestantism* (Prague:Kalich, 1970), p.61 and p.80.

15. *Ibid.*, p.77.

standpoint of its members was not identical with Hromadka's standpoint. It seems that there was an unceasing tension within the ECCB itself regarding its position in relation to the present Government. This tension became more obvious in the late 1960s, with the formation of the New Orientation Group.¹⁶

During the rigid Stalinist period [the 1950s and the early 1960s], the ECCB seldom made any open criticism of the Government. This policy was also shared by other churches. Its "*passive survival*" could be seen as a form of faithfulness and obedience. The relation between Church and State was still tense even in the time of the development of Christian-Marxist dialogue. Until 1967, the process of democratization of Czechoslovakia had opened up new possibilities for Christian participation in the communist society. Christians began to be recognized as responsible members. Lochman remarked that

for the first time, Christians were respected not only as citizens in spite of their Christianity but as Christians who were citizens of their own specific faith and confession, of their own specific contribution to their society. One's being a religious man ceased to be a minus point for a Christian active in his profession and his society. Consequently, Christians were not simply tolerated; they were expected to contribute in their own distinctive way and perspective to the formulation and realization of our common goals.¹⁷

The Federal Office of Ecclesiastical Affairs initiated a dialogue with quite new tolerance. The rights of the Church were recognized and the rehabilitation of previously condemned clergy and layman took place.

16. Trevor Beeson, *Discretion and Valour* (London:Collin, 1982), pp.253-254.

He wrote: "During the period prior to the Prague Spring a group of mainly young, radical pastors of the ECCB formed the 'New Orientation Group'. They were politically sophisticated and were the new theological counterpart of a generation of young Marxists who helped to pave the way for Dubcek's 'socialism with a human face'..... They were somewhat critical of the stance taken by Hromadka. They believe that close collaboration with the Communist Government of their country has done nothing to further the Christian mission among the Czech and Slovak peoples."

17. *Church in a Marxist Society*, p.107.

The *numerus clausus* was lifted from the seminaries and Government control loosened.

The ECCB was the most active church in responding to that event. In March 1968, the Synodical Council approved the aim of "*democratic socialism*".¹⁸ Moreover, it urged the congregations to participate in democratization whole-heartedly. On August 21, 1968, Soviet Russia and four other Warsaw Pact countries invaded Czechoslovakia. All the political reforms came to a halt. The ECCB was quick to respond to the news of occupation. On August 23, the Synodical Council sent a letter to all congregations supporting Czechoslovakia's struggle for renewal and protesting in the name of the whole Church against this infringement of the Nation's sovereignty. The letter also demanded that foreign armies stationed in Czechoslovakia be recalled.¹⁹ On August 28, the Pastors' Association of the ECCB announced: "The pastors commit themselves to the concept of humanity, carried out in freedom and truth and to the path of passive resistance against falsehood and injustice."²⁰ On September 2, the Christian Churches of Czechoslovakia in the Ecumenical Council, and the Roman Catholic Church, unanimously expressed in a message addressed to "*All Christian Churches in Czechoslovakia*", showed their support of the Government's reformed policy and condemned the invasion.²¹ All these protests manifested the ECCB's solidarity with people in the face of danger. During the period of so-called "*Normalization*", the Church was once again suppressed, and the content of the Church declarations came under attack from the State authorities who began criminal proceedings against members of the clergy suspected of distributing copies.

18. See J.B.Soucek, "Churches in Czechoslovakia Today." In: *The Reformed and Presbyterian World*, Vol.XXX (1968), p.60, and also *Ecumenical Press Service*, April 1968.
19. *Ecumenical Press Service*, August 29, 1968, pp.3-4.
20. *Ecumenical Press Service*, September 5, 1968, p.5.
21. *Ecumenical Press Service*, September 5, 1968, p.12.

The ECCB, under the stimulus of J.L.Hromadka and J.B.Soucek, emphasized solidarity with the people. Was the ECCB then a "people's church"? If a people's church was only measured in terms of the number of its membership and its social influence, then the ECCB was never a people's church. Or if a people's church was understood in the sense of *Volkskirche*, the ECCB was neither because the State no longer acknowledged the obligation to be a Christian State. As Lochman wrote:

In the fifties, our churches were pretty much in a ghetto situation. We were cut off from the ecumenical fellowship with Christian churches in other countries, especially in the early part of that decade. At that time we were also separate from the dominant trends in our society....²²

The members of ECCB comprised only 2% of the whole population; this is unlike the Roman Catholic Church in Poland which had an enormous mass base in contrast to the relatively modest numbers who were members of the Communist Party. Under these circumstances, a people's church necessarily acquired other characteristics from those it possessed at the time when it was the recognized leader and guardian of the spiritual life of society. Hromadka regarded a people's church which "stands here on behalf of the sovereign Shepherd to invite the distressed, tired, sick, and unhappy, no matter if they occupy high or low positions, though they belong to the multitudes of yesterday or tomorrow- the Church takes upon herself the responsibility for the poverty and sins of this world, is not conceited, does not look condescendingly upon anyone, does not turn away from anyone."²³ Lochman added the view that a people's church was rooted in the tradition of the Hussite understanding of the Gospel in its prophetic and evangelistic orientation toward the weary, and oppressed. A

22. *Church in a Marxist Society*, p.10.

23. J.L.Hromadka, "The Church of the Reformation Faces Today's Challenges." In: *Theology Today*, Vol.VI (1949), p.463.

people's church was a church of *this* people, and *this* society.²⁴ Therefore, the ECCB was not a people's church [*Volkskirche*] in the sense of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, rather it was a church which was allied to the way of its people and its society. That was what Hromadka and Lochman emphasized. How, then could they lead the Church in a socialist society to be a real "people's church"?

24. *Church in a Marxist Society*, p.66.

B. A Theological Reflection

In the last two chapters, we have discussed the views of Hromadka and Lochman on Marxism respectively. Although their explanations differed degree, they were positive towards it. Their point of departure for considering Christian witness in a communist context was the Church itself rather than the Marxist ideology and atheism. Even though their views might not be totally accepted, and especially Hromadka's one-sided viewpoint, it did not automatically mean that their theological reflection in a communist context were futile. In contrast, their faith in God, their positive understanding of the end of the Constantinian era, and their commitment to humanity, proved valid and relevant.

In October 1948, after the Communist Party took over Czechoslovakia, Hromadka preached on "*The Present Problems of the Church*":

The Church of Christ belongs to no era, and cannot be identified with anything in this world. Today we are involved in a radical change in the very structure of society. Rougher classes are taking over the direction of our society, and the problem for us Protestants is that these people have always lived on the fringe of national life, and have never been schooled by religion and by the Church. The middle classes, whose faith was never conspicuous for its vigour, have nonetheless received a certain religious culture: Socialists have no such tradition. From the human point of view, the present situation is much more painful for the Church. All outside support has been withdrawn. And yet, from the point of view of the Church of Christ, we are on the threshold of a finer and more blessed age. In future, we shall not be able to depend upon anything at all- neither upon wealth, nor upon the homage paid to us by society, nor upon any human aid, but solely upon the grace and love of God.¹

His view was once again fully expressed in another article "*The Church's Dependence on God and Its Independence from Man*" delivered at

1. *Ecumenical Press Service*, October 22, 1948, p.270.

the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches.² Hromadka's statement noted that the Church was at the end of the Constantinian era- the Church was no longer patronized or protected by the State- but he held firmly that this was not a misfortune for the Church. When old feudal rights were liquidated and when the churches suffered materially, that did not necessarily mean that the Church was persecuted, claimed Hromadka. It was only because the Church had become accustomed to so many privileges and support that it had a feeling of great injustice if these were taken away from it. That was what Hromadka frequently said,

"I am not afraid of the so-called godless world, as I am afraid of the godless church, that is to say a church that has preserved some of the traditions, customs and paraphernalia of the historical church, but has been deprived, step by step, of the demonstration of the Spirit and of power."³

Lochman in his article "*The Lordship of Christ in a Secularized World*" affirmed Hromadka's view. Lochman indicated that the end of the Constantinian era did not only negatively mean the relinquishing of material property by the Church as an institution, but also implied, positively and figuratively, a designation for the secularization of the spiritual property of the Church, of ecclesiastical talents and gifts. He argued that

this process also contains a missionary opportunity, in the true sense of the word *missio*: a distribution of the spiritual and intellectual goods entrusted to the Church into areas which otherwise could hardly be reached by the institutional church.⁴

Furthermore, it was false from a theological point of view to regard this change with an eager attitude in an attempt to preserve church life in its traditional form. The struggle was never in the category

2. J.L.Hromadka, "The Church's Dependence on God and Its Independence from Man." In: *Student World*, Vol.XLVIII (1955), pp.3-10.
3. J.L.Hromadka, "The Christian Foundation of World Community and Peace." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.XXXI (1988), p.98.
4. J.M.Lochman, *Church in a Marxist Society* (London:SCM, 1970), p.130.

of preserving the traditional order, but in serving the world, and proclaiming and following the Word of God. Thus, Lochman identified himself with Hromadka's view, saying:

A radical secularization can appear not only as a calamity but also as an opportunity, the possibility to finally break with illegitimate relations, to reject the temptation of clericalism once and for all, and not simply to defy the shaking of the foundations of the Constantinian house. For when the Church is thrown into the necessity of renunciation of any kind of grasping at things, it does not fall into a vacuum outside the Lordship of its Lord but, on the contrary, continues to live and to suffer under his imperishable promise.⁵

Lochman urged the Church to realize and take its minority position seriously. Hromadka's and Lochman's positive view of the end of Constantinian era was totally based on their strong belief in the sovereignty of God in the world. The world was God's world, and Marxism must therefore be understood as something which existed within God's world, as something which could not ultimately and finally threaten God's sovereignty.

Concerning the role of the Church in a Marxist society, Lochman gave a very full description in his so-called "*A Civilian Proclamation*".⁶ [*Zivile Verkündigung*] It meant as follows: 1) proving the freedom of the Gospel: reducing traditional uniformity; 2) serving in the movement from the Church towards the world: the way of an excentric congregation; 3) witnessing in interhuman relations: an unconditional humanism. Briefly speaking, "*reducing traditional uniformity*" referred to the need to be freed from legalism; that is, a witness without religious uniformity. It had two levels. In an individual sense, the distinctiveness of Christian was not a set of characteristics which could be realized by outward moralistic means. It went much deeper than that: It was rooted not in a style of life

5. Ibid., p.133.

6. Ibid., pp.69-86.

but in faith itself. So often the Church had succumbed to the temptation to understand itself, or to let itself be understood, as a religious institution, or as a society for the cultivation of a moral life because of its strong emphasis on the religious mode of life, claimed Lochman. In a corporate sense, it meant that the Church was identified with the "old law"; that is to say, it appeared to be the exponent of the former order, and the Gospel was seen as the ideology of the former society. This identification made it inaccessible to the new society, for example, in its theology of anti-communism.

Secondly, "*the way of an excentric congregation*" also had a twofold meaning. In an individual dimension, that meant a call for the laity to be witnesses in their work, because "the revolutionary changes of the Constantinian order made it unambiguously clear that the laity constituted the proper apostolic existence of the Church of Jesus Christ in the post-Constantinian world."⁷ In a social and collective dimension, the Church should never be at its centre, but should reach out because better justice and truer freedom for the world was part of the divine plan. Lochman urged that the Church should not grow merely into a ghettolike community centered around a cult but into a living community, into a fellowship that prayed, worked and suffered together.

Thirdly, "*an unconditional humanism*" implied both a personal and a social aspect. He wrote:

I emphasize the unconditional of man's turning to his neighbour, for it is here that Christian humanism is distinguished from general philanthropy.⁸

Unconditional humanism did not draw any line or exclude any group of people from his concern. Besides, personal care and need could never

7. Ibid., p.76.

8. Ibid., p.80.

be separated from a demand for a purposeful, organized and planned system of welfare for the whole sphere of man's social life, a reconstruction of society, and a reconciliation of international relations.

Lochman's civilian proclamation could find a parallel in Hromadka's theology. For instance, Hromadka frequently urged that "[we] liberate the Christian mind and life from the shackles of concepts and categories that have penetrated into the very fabric of dogmatic systems of our preaching and our way of life. We live very often much more by human inventions and discoveries of what we call 'god' than by the Word of the God of whom the biblical testimony gives account."⁹ Facing the tendency to fall to the temptation of a purely academic study of theology, Hromadka warned: "Theology is in its substance inseparable from the Church, being an essential function of the Church. The Church, however, is in its substance closely associated with the world; it lives at a quite definite place and in a quite definite time of human history. I wish to repeat: the Church is by its very nature related to the world and bears upon its shoulders all the misery and sorrow, all the perversion, and also the radiant hope and expectation, of the whole of humanity. And it is the direct link between theology and what is going on beyond the boundaries of the organized, empirical church."¹⁰

Lochman's civilian proclamation was a realistic and pragmatic theological reflection in a communist context. It removed the unnecessary and unbiblical clear-cut division of who a "real" Christian was; that is to say, Christians too easily fell into the

9. J.L.Hromadka, *Theology Between Yesterday and Tomorrow* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), p.24.

10. Ibid., p.14.

temptation of dividing Christians into different categories in order to fit them into their interpretation of what a "Christian" was, especially in a difficult times. Lochman's proclamations endeavoured to link up the close relationship between knowledge and interpretation of biblical study, the Gospel and the whole human life, church and society. More importantly, it took an interest both in individual relations and in social concerns. In contrast, Hromadka, in his writings, seldom referred to an individual Christian but rather to a church in a corporate sense. Whether Hromadka's pastoral concern for the individual worker and the simple citizen was sufficiently nourished by an in depth analysis of the degrees of justice- the political expression of love- in socialist socio-economic structures, remained an open question.

Both Hromadka and Lochman inherited the tradition of the Bohemian Reformation. The understanding of the Church of and the eschatological significance of the Bohemian Reformation shed light on their participation in society. Firstly, they understood the Church as a *Communio Viatorum*, band of pilgrims who held together by a common goal, a common hope and able to leave behind, even if at a time regretfully, any specific forms of church life. This emphasis resolved in principle the question of Church and State by all but abolishing the Church as an organization. Furthermore, they stressed that the Church existed in order to witness and to produce a clear and definite impact on the world. The Church is for the world.

Secondly, as regards the eschatological significance of the Bohemian Reformation, it helped both Hromadka and Lochman to challenge earthly society to become a better and more just society and to avoid falling into the temptation of identifying any earthly social order

with the manifestation of the Kingdom of God. That was the reason why they never confused Marxist utopianism and the Christian Kingdom of God, and they urged Christians to co-operate with the Marxist Government working for a better society. For Hromadka, eschatology did not simply mean the prophetic mission of the Church but also its priestly characteristic. Eschatology did not only challenge the world but also the Church itself. Following the Soviet invasion, Hromadka regarded the churches as being of crucial importance because they could become a source of hope and creative vitality. Hromadka said, "The Christian who believes deeply can never give up."¹¹

For Lochman, because of the ecumenical atmosphere and stimulus, his understanding of eschatology was more radical and revolutionary than that of Hromadka, especially after the invasion. He considered that eschatology opened up the future. That meant, politically, that no earthly political power could be considered absolute. All of the political powers must be challenged. Therefore, fatalism should be surrendered. In an article "*Reflection on the Resistance*" delivered on November 7, 1968 in the United States, Lochman said firmly,

"The problem of the power structure, however severe it is, is not the whole and total reality. The world of men is also the world of tanks; but the world of tanks is not the whole world of men. Man has his responsibilities, and they are not in vain; we shall not disregard the tanks and we know they have power; but we shall never forget that this is not what I would call our Alpha and Omega, the first and last word of human history. Our responsibility is limited, but it is a reality; the sphere of human responsibility is the sphere of history."¹²

Concerning resistance, he wrote:

In the situation of a world which is full of oppression and corruption, an act or an existence of Christian obedience might mean resistance..... Resistance is a legitimate category of Christian life and Christian ethics, and we have no reason to be ashamed of it. The roots of resistance are

11. *Ecumenical Press Service*, November 21, 1968, p.4.

12. J.M.Lochman, "Reflection on the Resistance." In: *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol.24 (1969), pp.185-186.

as deep as the roots of Christian existence in this estranged, ambiguous, and yet always to be challenged world.¹³

In his message, Lochman did not refer specifically to the Soviet invasion or the situation in Czechoslovakia. We have evidence however that he was thinking of it in another two articles "*Marxism, Liberalism, and Religion: An East European Perspective*" and "*Radical Secularity and Radical Grace*" which were written at the same time and showed his consistent thought on the subject. Neither did Lochman refer specifically to whether he supported unarmed resistance or armed resistance. It should be understood that, during the Vietnamese War, his affirmative statement might have been used by others to justify their views. According to the discussion in Chapter Two, we do believe that the choice between passive resistance or armed resistance was not a central question for him. The situation in Czechoslovakia however was more a practical than a theoretical question. Therefore, he remained open to it. He urged Christians not to abandon, but instead to strive for change in all those conditions under which man was an oppressed, enslaved, destitute, and despised being, despite all possible and actual difficulties. Man was not the prey of history but had the capacity to shape it. It was perhaps the time to say Hromadka's the great "NO". Hromadka considered that

she [the Church] does not close her eyes to what has to be corrected. When necessary she raises her voice against injustices. However, she does not exhaust herself by small protests and sullen moralization; she keeps up her strength for effective criticisms and for the great "NO" to be said if someone tries to lead her away from God's authority and to subject her to a human authority..... But the Church is not mute-especially when she sees injustices done willfully, when human dignity is maliciously trampled upon, when people seat themselves upon the throne of God..... Whenever the authority of the living God and the validity of his Word are questioned, the Church, and especially the Church of the Reformation, has to speak clearly and definitely; she cannot and must not talk indistinctly and vaguely.¹⁴

13. Ibid., pp.180-181.

14. J.L.Hromadka, "The Church of the Reformation faces today's challenges." In: *Theology Today*, Vol.6 (1949), p.459.

How did Hromadka and Lochman assess their theological positions after the Soviet invasion and in the face of a new Communist Party which obviously betrayed Marxism? Did they regard their understanding of communism as being still valid? Did they suggest that the churches should still maintain a positive, co-operative and constructive attitude towards the Government? Hromadka died on December 26, 1969, whilst Lochman left Czechoslovakia on August 29, 1968. These were questions left behind for the churches in Czechoslovakia to solve. Nevertheless one thing that remained the same was that the invasion of Soviet Russia did not lead them to reject their positive understanding of Marxism.¹⁵

The path which Hromadka and Lochman took was dialectical. That meant on the one hand that they were rejected by the State, and on the other hand, they felt a responsibility towards society. It was their struggle. They stressed pro-existence; that is to say, giving up every self-justification but co-operating with the Government for the good of people. Basically they regarded the Marxist Government existing as by God's decree and consent, leading their country and endeavouring to do something good for the people.

15. For Hromadka's position, see his autobiography *Thoughts of a Czech Pastor* (London: SCM, 1970), p.87. For Lochman's position, see *Ecumenical Review*, Vol.41 (1985), pp.140-141. In his book review of *Marxism and Christianity: The Quarrel and the Dialogue in Poland*, by Josef Tischner], Lochman commented that (a) Tischner does not pay attention to the fact that there are situations other than his in which some insights of Marxist analysis may play a positive role, as a challenge to unjust social and economic conditions. Christians may sometimes have reason to learn from such analysis, though of course they must always use it critically; (b) there is another aspect of the book which I find spiritually questionable: this evaluation of Marxism does not sufficiently reveal the spirit of Christian self-criticism and repentance. Is it possible, from a Christian point of view, to say about any religious community what the author states about his own Polish church: "Never in its history had the Polish church become 'an opium of masses'"? Such an attitude weakens the credibility of our criticism of Marxism.

According to Hromadka, the substance of Christian witness in a communist context is that

the more we are concerned for ourselves, the less we are free, the more we are void of freedom, the more we are enslaved by our own selfishness. The more we think of other people, of their need and suffering, the less we live under the pressure of fear and anxiety. Love in its very substance is a self-identification with our fellow man, is a freedom from ourselves, from the selfish fear of the human heart.¹⁶

Jeremiah wrote to the Jews in exile under Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon:

Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their products. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. (Jer. 29:5-7)

This was the way which Hromadka and Lochman followed in a communist context.

16. "The Church's Dependence on God and Its Independence from Man." In: *Student World*, p.7.

C. Christian Witness

Hromadka was a member of the Central Action Committee of the National Front of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia. M.Spinka commented that

it was the most powerful body, aside from the government itself, for carrying out the "ruthless and unscrupulous" transformation of the bourgeois society. Did not this make him [Hromadka] responsible for acts of the Committee? How did that square with his profession of non-involvement?¹

He continued in his comment that the Communist Government could hardly find another like Hromadka to make its propaganda effective. Emil Brunner also angrily criticized Hromadka that

what will he [Hromadka], what will his friends have to say for themselves when this totalitarian system [communist government] that has been forced on their people collapses and is brought to judgment, as the Nazi system was brought to judgment in the Nuremberg Trails? They will stand convicted as collaborators, who do not merely co-operate with the power of tyranny and injustice but even set themselves up as its champions!²

The new *Penal Judicial Law* of August 1950 stated: "Anyone who misuses his position in the Church for the purpose of influencing political affairs in a manner injurious to the People's Democracy shall be deprived of his personal freedom for a period varying from three months to three years."³ The law itself did not define what "in a manner injurious to the People's Democracy" was. No matter what the definition was, in regard to Hromadka, his position in the Central Action Committee meant that he could easily be accused of "influencing political affairs in a manner injurious to the People's Democracy". If he was not accused of this, it might be because he was, at least, either identified with the Committee's policy as Brunner said or was found useful as Spinka thought. Could one logically conclude as

1. M.Spinka, *Church in a Communist Society* (Hartford:Conn, 1954), p.31.
2. Karl Barth, *Against the Stream*, trans. E.M.Delacour (London:SCM, 1954), p.112.
3. *Ecumenical Press Service*, November 4, 1950.

Spinka and Brunner said that Hromadka needed to bear responsibility for the Committee's acts?

Firstly, I think that it is important to distinguish between mistakes that are collectively made by a committee and those made by an individual. If a mistake is made by a committee, this does not mean that each member of the committee should share the same responsibility, but rather that each one is justified on his own merit. Otherwise it would be an unfair and irrational judgment, as with communists in communist countries who attack the bourgeoisie collectively, having no regard to whether individuals of this class are "good". Secondly, no one knows exactly how Hromadka worked in the Committee. From the discussion in Chapter One, it is apparent that he was a member of the Committee because he wanted to transform it from within. Further, his position could also provide him with an opportunity to make representations to the Government on behalf of Christians or other people.⁴ Some choose the way which separates themselves from "sinners" and goes to their sanctuary or opposes the Communist Government openly. But some choose the way which is among "sinners", and seeks to transform them. Perhaps the latter is Hromadka's way. I do not think that he made a mistake in allying himself with the Committee, but he did take a risk in seeking to transform the Party.

The distinguished features of the Christian witness made by Hromadka and Lochman in Czechoslovakia from 1948 to 1969 were the establishment of the Christian Peace Conference [CPC] in 1958 and their contribution to the Christian-Marxist dialogue. One of the

4. This view is shared by Trevor Beeson, in his book *Discretion and Valour* (London:Collins, 1982), p.243 and Charles West, in his book *Communism and the Theologians* (London:SCM, 1958), p.72.

contributions of the CPC was the breaking of the one-sided and dominant position held by the West in the ecumenical circle, but at the same time it bore the mark of "an international front organisation inspired, controlled, and promoted, both structurally and materially, by the Soviets."⁵ While Christian-Marxist dialogue had successfully bridged the antagonistic and incompatible gap between Christians and Marxists, especially within a communist context, it was criticized for having done this "at the cost of sacrificing religious influence and jeopardizing the very existence of the churches."⁶ Were the CPC and the Christian-Marxist dialogue, then, faithful or timid witnesses in a communist context? This is the question which is addressed below.

The Christian Peace Conference⁷

The idea behind the formation of the CPC can be traced back to the 19th century. Jan Amos Comenius had conceived the idea of an ecumenical council which was not only to oversee inner Christian business, but also to alleviate the general miseries of mankind by establishing a way of "light, peace and salvation."⁸ In 1928, the World Council for International Friendship Work of Churches had taken place in Prague. They discussed the ways in which the churches might take on and further their mission of peace. Hromadka participated at that peace conference. In 1934, D.Bonhoeffer, youth secretary of the World Council for International Friendship Work of Churches, in a speech at Fano suggested the establishment of an International

5. Laszlo Revesz, "The Christian Peace Conference." In: *Conflict Studies*, No.91 (1978), p.1.
6. Ludvik Nemec, "The Czechoslovakia Heresy and Schism." In: *Transaction of American Philosophy Society*, Vol.65 (1975), p.68.
7. The minutes and reports of the Christian Peace Conference were published in *Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia [1958-1964]* and *Ecumenical Information from Czechoslovakia [1965-1969]* by the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Czechoslovakia.
8. J.M.Lochman, *Church in a Marxist Society* (London:SCM, 1970), p.45.

Christian Peace Council.⁹ At the foundation of the World Council of Churches, it was decided that the World Council for International Friendship Work of Churches should be dissolved. From the point of view of the formation of the CPC, its foundation had become necessary because the dissolution of the World Council had created a gap for the international ecumenical peace work of churches which could not be filled by the WCC, especially since its committees soon came under the political pressures created by the Cold War.¹⁰ Besides, even though Hromadka was a member of the presidium of the World Peace Council, he

9. Ditlef Urban, "A Crisis from the Very Beginning." In: *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, Vol.III (1983), p.17.
10. The World Council of Churches's position on communism in the 1950s was reflected in the following statements: firstly, concerning the Korean conflict, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in Toronto in 1950 stated: "An act of aggression has been committed. The United Nations' Commission in Korea, the most objective witness available, asserts that all evidence points to a calculated, co-ordinated attack prepared and launched with secrecy by the North Korean troops.....We therefore commend the United Nations, an instrument of world order, for its prompt decision to meet this aggression and for authorizing a police measure which every member nation should support.....Post-war totalitarianism relies not only upon military pressures but also upon a policy of exploiting the distress of the poor, the resentments of subject peoples, discriminations on the grounds of race, religion or national origin, the chaos of badly governed nations, and the general disunity between nations. The Korean attack may well be one of a possible series of thrusts at such weak points in the world society." [D.Gaines, *The World Council of Churches*, p.380.] It led to the resignation of Dr.T.C.Chao, one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches, in protest at the one-sided view of the World Council of Churches.

Secondly, the Executive Committee in Bievres, France in 1951 also stated: "The totalitarian doctrine is a false doctrine. It destroys human integrity and uses the means of slavery in the name of justice. In this respect there is a fundamental conflict between the Christian conviction and totalitarian ideology. These are hard words. But a system based on a false doctrine cannot be overcome by force alone and every effort must be made to meet the basic challenge of totalitarian communism by means other than war." [D.Gaines, *The World Council of Churches*, p.383.]

Hromadka responded: "In a Tragically decisive moment of world history, the World Council of Churches identified itself [under most dubious circumstances] with one group of great powers, backed its military action, and encouraged all U.N. members to participate in it." from "A Voice from the Other Side." In: *Christianity and Crisis*, March 1951, p.28.

found that it did not get wide support. Some argued that if the CPC's base was in the "free" world rather than in Prague, it might have far-reaching influence because it would not then need to be subjected to communist governments. If so, then, Hromadka and his colleagues would have had no need to establish the CPC. Its base in Prague did have far-reaching effects through the contribution made by Christians living in communist countries, and through its avoidance of a western viewpoint.

In October 1957, theologians of the Slovak Evangelical Theological Faculty in Bratislava-Modra and of the Comenius Faculty in Prague felt strongly that the political challenge created by nuclear weapons necessitated an unequivocal theological position. Besides, the international distrust also penetrated the churches. For instance, various utterances coming from the western churches created the impression that a believing Christian must necessarily be in disguised or open opposition to the new socialist states. Some even held that any clergyman functioning behind the Iron Curtain had to be a communist or he would be in jail.¹¹ All the above reasons contributed to the formation of the CPC. The first CPC took place in Prague in June 1958. There were 40 church leaders and theologians mostly coming from eight socialist countries in eastern Europe, whilst a few came from West Germany. The first CPC stated that the aims of the CPC were not only against war hysteria, against a belief in inescapable destiny, against atomic weapons, and against the Cold War, but that it was also in favour of the reconciliation of peoples, of a

11. J.M.Lochman in his lecture in the United States met the following comment: "I do not know who invited this gentleman into the United States. But it is clear that he is a Communist agent. There are no Christian theologians in Eastern Europe." [*Church in a Marxist Society*, p.17.] Even in 1968, many Christians in the West were still suspicious of Christians coming from the socialist societies.

genuine dialogue on the most important problems and tasks of mankind today, and of a new order for all men.¹² Furthermore, Hromadka described the future tasks as follows:

We are gathered here, theologians and representatives of churches, in order to review our theology, in order to revise our theological and ethical standards and in order to examine whether or not our theology is rooted in the spiritual depth of the prophets and the apostles or whether it has not become a type of human ideology.¹³

At the First All Christian Peace Assembly [ACPA] held in Prague in 1961, Hromadka was elected as the first president. There were 623 participants coming from 42 countries.¹⁴ In the opening address "Peace on Earth"¹⁵, Hromadka unambiguously stated that the establishment of the CPC was not to provide competition with the World Council of Churches, but was to assist and stimulate ecumenism within the Christian family united in the World Council of Churches. Hromadka also made unequivocally clear both *his* and the CPC's position concerning the issue surrounding the communist world and the Democratic West. He said,

"Before our eyes, the so-called Christian nations have ceased to be not only the political, but also the ethical and spiritual teachers of the present-day mankind. The social upheavals of 1917 onwards have transferred the centre of gravity of forces aiming at responsible, creative reconstruction of society not only from the traditional feudal classes, but also from the capitalists and the bourgeoisie, to the circles of the working people and of nations which only recently had been under the rule of colonialist powers..... What we face today is however no longer a revolutionary experiment, but a reasoned, planned and gradually implemented programme of a new structure of society, both urban and rural, in traditionally Christian as well as non-Christian, culturally developed and underdeveloped countries. It is a great struggle to provide for man security and social equality, to secure for him not only political, but also social and economic freedom";

12. *Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia*, Vol.VI, June, 1959, pp.46-55.

13. Detlef Urban, "A Crisis from the Very Beginning." In: *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, Vol.IV (1983), p.19.

14. 310 came from countries in the Warsaw Pact, Yugoslavia, Cuba and Ghana, while the rest came from the rest of the world.

15. See J.L.Hromadka, "Peace on Earth." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.III (1961), pp.100-118.

"The ideals and norms of Western democracy were subjected to a hard test since 1917, and they cease to be the creative norms of the new social order. The entire structure of the so-called Christian civilization is shaken, it is subject to attacks not only from within, that is, from doubts, unbelief, the exacting reasoning of modern man—but also to those from the newly awakening religions especially in Asia, but also in Africa, and from the new socialist society, purposefully building upon non-religious foundations";

"We speak now as members of the Church of Christ, who, on the basis of their faith and their understanding of the message of the Gospel regard these efforts to link up the Church and Christian civilization with warfare against the socialist world or against communism as a delusion and disaster striking at the very roots of Christian faith and crippling the great mission of the Church in our days."

In addition to its lack of criticism of communist countries, the CPC gave outsiders the impression that the CPC sided with socialist governments and was even an agent of communist propaganda. However, the call for disarmament and abolition of all nuclear weapons were the main themes of that conference.

In 1964, the II ACPA was held in Prague. The theme was "*My Covenant is Life and Peace*." There were nearly 1000 people from 50 countries. There seemed to be a growing acceptance of the CPC by Christians in the West. The reason for their participation however was rather that they wanted an opportunity to meet fellow Christians from eastern Europe than that they shared its ideological interpretation about the policies that made for peace. In a sense, the CPC had succeeded in bridging the gap between Christians in the West and in eastern Europe. Peaceful co-existence, the establishment of denuclearised zones, a total ban on nuclear test, a plea for admission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations and the German questions were still their main concerns.

Facing the new international political development since the mid 1960s, the CPC shifted its emphasis from peace and disarmament to

international justice and liberation. For instance, the theological study-group of the CPC in October 1966 gave an answer to the question of use of violence in revolution which continued the discussion that had been held by the committee of Church and Society of the World Council of Churches in July 1966. The CPC made the reservation however that military force should be resorted to only as an *ultima ratio*. *Ultima ratio* constituted:

If violent measures have already been used by the oppressors;
 If all possible methods of legal criticism and legal actions have been courageously and patiently tried, without success;
 If a situation has arisen which is more harmful to human beings than a violent revolution would probably be.

The document concluded with an important theological explanation:

If Christians support revolution, they derive the right to do so not from the idea of revolution but from the Christian Gospel. In so doing the goals of humanization and justice are not made relative. On the contrary, we should understand these goals more deeply, more objectively, more concretely. This means that our participation in revolutionary action must not be motivated by hatred, nor by confidence in force, but solely by sympathy and solidarity with those who suffer..... and by the hope of a new just order, by readiness to forgive.¹⁶

Once again, its position on violence in the revolution made others criticize its understanding of peace.

In 1968, the III ACPA coincided with the so-called "Prague Spring". The theme was "*Seek Peace and Pursue it. Save Man—Peace is possible.*" A few months after the commencement of the meeting, the Soviet troops invaded Czechoslovakia. Facing this political crisis, there was a dispute and division within the CPC itself. One group felt that the events since August 21 "had set the clock back for the progress of socialist humanism in the world and had helped to reinforce the trend towards police states." Other participants

16. J.M.Lochman, "Ecumenical Theology of Revolution." In: *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol.21 (1968), pp.114-115.
 It quoted from *Junge Kirche*, 1966, p.658f.

regarded the event as a logical result of agreements between the Warsaw Pact countries which had as their goal not the occupation of Czechoslovakia but the prevention of a crisis which would lead to civil war and would favour the action of imperialist forces and lead to terrible consequences for peace and security in Europe and throughout the world. Disagreement was also voiced on whether the withdrawal of troops from Czech soil was conditional upon the normalization of the country, or whether such withdrawal was necessary before normalisation could take place.¹⁷ The crisis within the CPC was only a beginning. Later in November 1969, Hromadka resigned as the President of the CPC in protest against the blatant removal of Dr. Ondra- general secretary of the CPC. Since that date, the CPC has lost its support from the West. For instance, Charles West had been part of a North American CPC chapter, but after 1969, he organized a more independent group called *Christian Associated for Relations with Eastern Europe* [CAREE].¹⁸

Since its inception in 1958, the CPC had met a great deal of suspicion and criticism both from outside and within the communist world. Darri! Hudson commented upon that the reason of the establishment of the CPC was because "Hromadka may have wanted to get support for the secular ideas and projects of the Eastern bloc."¹⁹ Others commented that it was too one-sided in its judgment because it never criticized communist societies; it was not a political organization but it had an interest in all political issues; it provided an illusion for others to believe that the churches in communist countries had religious freedom, but in reality this was not

17. *Ecumenical Press Service*, October 10, 1968, p.2.

18. See Paul Mojzes, "Christian-Marxist Dialogue." In: *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol.8 (1971), pp.486-491.

19. Darri! Hudson, "Prague in Retrospect." In: *Lutheran World*, Vol.9 (1962), p.156.

the case. All these criticisms lead one to ask: Was the CPC a witness or a betrayal of it? Was it a prophet of the contemporary world or an agent of communist propaganda?

It was undeniable that the CPC was on the communist side. Like Hromadka, its mistake was that it seldom made any criticism of communist governments, even to the extent of identifying itself too closely with a particular form of socialism. But its mistake could not overshadow its achievements, such as serving as a bridge between Christians in communist and non-communist societies, and in support for disarmament. In order to give a fair assessment of the CPC, it is important to distinguish between its primary and incidental tasks. The primary task means that the chief reason for its formation is largely because of its concern for peace and for reconciliation between nations. Its lack of criticism of communist governments is only incidental in order to achieve its primary purpose.

The formation of the CPC was not the initiation of communist governments. It was the result of deliberation by Czech theologians who felt the antagonistic atmosphere amongst nations and churches, and they wanted to make a contribution towards removing this sense of mistrust and the tense relationship. Secondly, it was undeniable that the CPC leaders saw Marxism as a radical form of humanism, and even supported communist governments. But their support did not solely and directly mean that the CPC was an agent of communist governments. Thirdly, in a communist state, the CPC needed to make some concessions to the government before it was allowed to function, such as reducing or even making no criticism of communist governments. Its compromise might be criticized as an act of conformism, but it was the only way by which it could achieve a higher ideal. In addition, the events

following 1968 [that is, the divided standpoint on the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the dismissal of Dr. Ondra, and the resignation of Hromadka] showed that there were contradictions in the CPC which could not be overcome and these were considered dangerous for its own power base. However, 1968 showed that it was wrong to equate the CPC with the policies pursued by communist governments in spite of many affinities that might have existed up to that time. Leading personalities in Prague, especially President Hromadka, had succeeded in keeping the organisation an integral whole.

In principle, I consider that the CPC [before 1969] was not originally an agent of propaganda used by communist governments, but rather an attempt to give a responsible witness within a limited area of freedom. In December 1989 after the breaking down of the Berlin Wall, the General Secretary of the CPC Lubomir Mirejovsky and other CPC leaders issued an article "*Christian Peace Witness Must Not Be Linked With Any Socio-Political Order*". This stated that

it is true that during the difficult period of the Cold War and in an atmosphere of strong ideological pressure, the CPC accepted some compromises, made mistakes and in some cases gave way to pressure. We need to do penance for this, and to alter our methods of working and our terminology.²⁰

But its mistakes do not require the denial of its achievements. I share what the Working Committee of the CPC said in June 1990:

We acknowledge the complicated situation of the churches in socialist countries which tried to bring a positive Christian message into the divided world and initiated the way to the dialogue with their authorities. We recognize the difficult situation our movement was in at that time, which we cannot easily judge. We do not, however, believe that these mistakes prevented the CPC from developing its distinctive and unique contribution to peace and to justice throughout the world.²¹

20. Tracy Early, "Christian Peace Conference: What is its role now?" In: *One World*, April 1990, p.18.

21. *Ecumenical Press Service*, 1990.7.103.

Perhaps, the ten year history of the CPC under the leadership of Hromadka is not enough time to assess its achievements and its failures, especially, since the Soviet invasion halted its expected and planned development or transformation.

As C. West commented on the CPC after the second ACPA:

It provides an idea that is acceptable at one and the same time to the governments of the countries where Christians lived and to their consciences. It was an umbrella under which great numbers of Christians in the East could meet each other and their Western brethren as they could under no other auspices; and it was a common starting point for a theological approach to world affairs different from all political ideologies.²²

Christian-Marxist dialogue

Under a rigid Marxist society, Hromadka realized clearly that

in the spiritual vacuum of modern humanity created by so many sins of commission and omission of the modern man, the method of dialectical materialism has developed into a kind of ideology, metaphysics and of Weltanschauung. No human society can live without some measure of ideology. The ideology of Marxism may be partly inconsistent with, partly in contradiction to, the original motives of Marxist thought.²³

Thus, he encouraged dialogue in order to help Christians and Marxists to understand each other better, and more deeply.

Lochman pointed out that the dialogue which had taken place in Czechoslovakia was quite different from that of other socialist states.²⁴ There were, firstly, the Czechs [not only the Czech Protestant Brethren] who self-consciously identified with the Hussite Reformation. Because of its opposition to the existing hierarchical church structure, and its emphasis on the social responsibility of the

22. Charles West, "The Second All-Christian Peace Assembly." In: *Christianity and Crisis*, November 16, 1964, p.226.

23. J.L.Hromadka, "The Present Age and the Crisis of Christian Civilization." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.I (1958), p.92.

24. James Bentley, *Between Marx and Christ* (London:NLB, 1982), pp.11-12

Gospel, the Czech Reformation developed a type of Christianity with which even communists could identify. Therefore, when the Czech Marxists traced back their own roots, they saw in Hus a social revolutionary. For this reason, Marx's claim that religion was the opium of the people did not hold true for Czech history. For instance, in the 1960s, Robert Kalivoda- a Czech Marxist who participated in the Christian-Marxist dialogue- wrote a volume on Hussite ideology, urging that Marxists ought to differentiate between religion that served as an opiate and religion that did not; V.Gardavsky- a Czech Marxist philosopher- was proud of his country's religious inheritance and appreciated that "the Reformation had a special significance for Czechs and Slovaks, for our ancestors were the first to herald its arrival."²⁵ However, it is important to realize that the Marxist philosophers' understanding of religion does not imply that the Marxists who hold power have the same viewpoint. That is why Lochman said that "there were too many unmarxist components playing their part in the development of Stalinism, after consciously manipulating Marxist theory in the interest of Stalin's domestic and foreign policy. The historical development of Marxism had had its ambiguities and many of the doctrines of Marx and Lenin needed periodic reconsideration."²⁶

Secondly, Lochman noted that Czechoslovakia had preserved the tradition of dialogue. He explained that Czechoslovakia regarded as supremely important the formula of the first president of their country, T.G.Masaryk: "Democracy is discussion". It was in this context that the dialogue developed and began to flourish. The

25. Ibid., p.143.

It quoted from V.Gardavsky, *God is not yet dead* (Penguins, 1973), p.13.

26. J.M.Lochman, *Encountering Marx*, trans. Edwin Robertson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) p.13.

Stalinist pattern of imposition from above was alien to the Czechoslovakia. That was why Christian-Marxist dialogue in Czechoslovakia was one of the earliest to take place in eastern Europe. But was it as a result of the influence of the Czechoslovak tradition, as Lochman had stated? Following the Hussite movement, a real spirit of dialogue between Protestants and Roman Catholics never occurred until the First Republic. Besides, during the 1950s and the early 1960s, Masaryk was proclaimed as an enemy of the nation. Therefore, I do not see how the Czechoslovak tradition of dialogue contributed to the Christian-Marxist dialogue; on the contrary, persons like Hromadka and Machovec marked the beginning of this.

On the Christian side, it is undeniable that Hromadka was the pioneer of Christian-Marxist dialogue. In the early 1930s, a series of discussions on Marxism and Christianity had been initiated under his leadership. The obvious event was his co-operation with communists during that time in an attempt to strengthen democracy in Spain. Apart from his positive attitude towards Marxism, Hromadka's long standing willingness to undertake dialogue with people of other convictions was another reason why he initiated a dialogue with Marxists.²⁷ In 1959, during the Cold War and before Christian-Marxist dialogue matured in Czechoslovakia, Hromadka expressed the following desire:

We have not yet penetrated beyond ideologies to the place where Christian *man* and communist *man* come together to speak with one another, not as representatives of ideological systems, but as human beings with their hearts and minds, sorrows and sins, desires and aspirations..... A real openhearted dialogue without suspicion, distrust and prejudice could render tremendous help not only to the

27. J.L.Hromadka, "Towards a Dialogue." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.II (1959) pp.307-310.

In this article, Hromadka encouraged dialogue with Eastern Orthodox, young churches of Asia and Africa and Roman Catholic.

ecumenical movement but also to our struggling, suffering and forward-looking humanity.²⁸

In order to fulfill his dream, Hromadka endeavoured to do the work of "de-ideologizing" Marxism- viz rigid Stalinist dogmatism and to seek for Marxism's human, original and authentic face- on the one hand; also he sought to "de-mythologize" Christianity by which he sought to remove some obstacles for Marxists and so help them to de-ideologize their own images of Christianity and to help the Church to elaborate a critical theology to meet its traditionalism, on the other hand.

Two distinguished examples of this effort can be cited as follows. Firstly, Hromadka introduced Marxism as one of the subjects in the Comenius Faculty during the 1950s, not because it was a government requirement, but because Hromadka found that the more profoundly Christians understood Marxism, the more deeply Christians realized their failure in the past and the more willingly they co-operated with Marxists in building a more humanized society. According to Lochman, the Comenius Faculty was probably the first to undertake a study of the Early Marx as a challenge to theology and to the Church and then also to Stalin's own form of Marxism.²⁹ Secondly, Hromadka's work *"Gospel for Atheists"* in 1958 showed that he was fully aware of the needs and possibilities for an explicit dialogue with Marxists. In his book, he attempted to eliminate the prejudices and misunderstandings of Christians towards Marxism and encouraged Christians to co-operate with Marxists working for a more humanised society. It is clear that the way Hromadka took was to prepare Christians to meet Marxists. Hromadka believed that in order to

28. Ibid., p.310.

29. *Encountering Marx*, pp.27-28.

Lochman referred to the Swiss theologian Franz Leib, who had studied the texts of the Early Marx and pointed out the theological and political relevance. It was brought into the Comenius Faculty. The Early Marx means the Paris Manuscripts. Details of it can be seen in D.McLellan, *Marx before Marxism*.

transform Marxists, Christians first needed to transform themselves and to take Marxism seriously.

The purpose of dialogue is not merely to exchange ideas, but it is working together for something. Lochman held that "the spirit of authentic Christianity and of authentic Marxism is the spirit of dialogue"³⁰; that is, dialectic and eccentric. That is why he believed that dialogue was a step towards a reality which was greater than their systems [Christianity and Marxism]. In dialogue, both Hromadka and Lochman warned that it was important to recognize areas both of convergence and of divergence in order to avoid syncretism. The common concerns were to be found in the concept of humanisation, in the importance of history, and in future-oriented thinking, while the main divergence was the question of God or the question of transcendence.³¹ Dialogue is never an easy-going compromise, but it is to accept and respect each other's differences, and to further mutual understanding instead of speculation. Besides, dialogue urges both sides to return to the formation of their faith and convictions and true to their own basic principles, and think through afresh their starting point of the reflection and their practical goal.³²

On the Marxist side, the effort of M.Machovec should not be disregarded. His contribution was not less than Roger Garaudy. M.Machovec began as a Catholic and almost studied for the priesthood, then became a Marxist during Czechoslovakia's resistance to Nazi occupation. Already in 1957, during the dark time of repression, M.Machovec- Professor of Philosophy at Charles University in Prague-

30. *Church in a Marxist Society*, p.172.

31. *Ibid.*, pp.173-178.

32. J.L.Hromadka, "On the Threshold of Dialogue between Christian and Marxist." In: *South East Asia Journal of Theology*, Vol.8 (1967), p.45.

wrote his book "*Smysl lidskeho zivota*" [The Meaning of Human Life]. Those were inauspicious times for the publication of such a book. But the book and its revised version, which was published in 1965, especially the last chapter entitled "Dialogue", proved the most significant Marxist theoretical exposition of the need for dialogue. In 1962, he wrote another book "*Marxismus und dialektische Theologie*" which appraised three theologians, Barth, Bonhoeffer and Hromadka.³³ The most remarkable work of his was "*A Marxist Looks at Jesus*" which was written after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

In 1964, Machovec organized a seminar at the university to which he invited domestic and foreign theologians. The Christians involved in dialogue were J.L.Hromadka, M.Opocensky, J.M.Lochman, J.Smolik, Peter Haban, Charles West and others, while the Marxists involved were V.Gardavsky, M.Prucha, R.Kalivoda and others. Afterwards, Christian-Marxist dialogue became visible. The greatest public impact was made by V.Gardavsky who published one of the most profound Marxist series of essays on Christianity in "*Literarny Noviny*" in 1966 and 1967. These were later published as a book under the title "*God is not Yet Dead*". Like Hromadka, Machovec's effort was to prepare a way for Marxists to dialogue with Christians. Besides the effort made by Hromadka and Machovec, there were some other factors which contributed to the development of dialogue.

Lochman noted that a study of the Early Marx, a recovery of interest in the biblical inheritance and the change of attitude of Christians contributed to the development of dialogue.³⁴ Firstly, the Paris Manuscripts of Marx- known as the Early Marx- received attention

33. M.Machovec, *Marxismus und dialektische Theologie* (Zurich, 1965). German translated by D.Neumarker.

34. *Encountering Marx*, pp.21-46.

after Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalinism in 1956. In short, the basic thesis of the Early Marx was that "man's objectification of himself in capitalist society denies his species-being instead of confirming it."³⁵ The humanist attitude of the Early Marx played a significant role in the development of Christian-Marxist dialogue. Secondly, the recovery of interest of the biblical heritage of Marxists showed that Christianity was not exactly the same as the official Marxist understanding of religion. For instance, V.Gardavsky made a comment on Christianity "for frequently failing to measure up to its own potential force, for holding aloof from politics and the class war, for caring about its own prestige, and for not being capable of digging down to its own roots [these roots included the Old Testament insight that possessions delude and imprison instead of freeing human beings, as well as Jesus's attack on the sterility of the official dogmatic religion]."³⁶ Thirdly, since after Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church had a great change in their traditional attitude of opposition towards Marxism. It was obvious that in 1965 and 1966 the Paulusgesellschaft- a group of German speaking theologians and scientists whose aim was to find a contemporary language of faith- had organized two open meetings of Christian-Marxist dialogue in Salzburg and Herrenchiemsee respectively. The Roman Catholic Church also played an important role in Marienbad in 1967.

All the above factors, internally and externally, led to the historical event of 1967; that is, the first Christian-Marxist dialogue to take place in a communist country at Marianske Lazne [Marienbad]. The theme was "*Creativity and Freedom*".³⁷ The congress

35. D.McLellan, *Marx Before Marxism* (London:Mamillan, 1970), p.170.

36. James Bentley, p.144.

37. J.M.Lochman, "Creativity and Freedom in a Human Society." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.X (1967), pp.115-122.

had wide-reaching consequences as it gathered about 170 of the most prominent Marxist and Christian scholars from many countries. Hromadka in a speech on "*Unüberwindlicher Gegensatz oder ausraumbare Missverständnisse?*" considered that this dialogue was no longer a theoretical debate for the sake of debate, but it had to try to solve the problems of mankind and improve life.³⁸ The impact of the Mariánské Lázně on later Czechoslovak events could not be easily evaluated, though it is exaggeration to hold it responsible for the emergence of the "Prague Spring". To many observers, "Mariánské Lázně constituted a turning point in the history of dialogue in that it marked the end of the introductory stage, known as 'the dialogue about the dialogue.'"³⁹ At a minimum it moved the dialogue in Czechoslovakia into high gear. Lochman remarked upon that meeting:

The survival of mankind depends on the unceasing implementation of social and historical responsibility. And the vision of unthought of potentialities of mankind in the era of a scientific technological revolution demands the development of a free and creative humanity. The trends and ideas which emphasize on the deepest levels of their [Christians and Marxists] traditions the creativity and freedom in human society face a tremendous task which brings them closer together and makes them partners in an authentic dialogue..... Their common understanding of the decisive importance of the quest for the meaning of life, and of the social and historical destiny of man is the *cantus firmus* which makes even the necessary and unconcealed dissonances of their dialogue in the last resort fruitful and creative.⁴⁰

During the "Prague Spring" in 1968, the first public meeting of Christian-Marxist dialogue was held in Prague on April 29, 1968, with twelve panelists. The attendance was estimated between 1200 and 3000. The dialogue was very open and spirited. Besides this meeting, a lot of other dialogue meetings took place. Lochman noted that

- He gave a brief summary of what had been discussed in Marienbad.
38. J.L.Hromadka, "Unüberwindlicher Gegensatz oder ausraumbare Missverständnisse?" In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.X (1967), pp.109-114.
 39. Charles Andras, "The Christian-Marxist Dialogue." In: *East Europe*, Vol.17 (1968), p.13.
 40. "Creativity and Freedom in a Human Society." In: *Communio Viatorum*, p.122.

the practical co-operation between Christians and Marxists as citizens of a socialist society reached a new level. With unique intensity, this happened in the memorable year of 1968 as a result of the attempts at a far-reaching democratization of our socialist society. A subject-object relation, so typical of the Stalinist era in which the citizens- particularly the citizens of a non-conformist creed- were often considered as an object of political administration, was challenged. New relations of growing mutual respect and solidarity developed in the common search for the humanisation of our society. Thus Czechoslovak Christians started to play a new role in their cultural and social environment.⁴¹

The dialogue was brilliant but short when the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia took place. In spite of that, the invasion did not stop the cooperation between Christians and Marxists in the short term. Paradoxically, as Hromadka wrote: The invasion brought about the most fervent cooperation ever experienced as Christians and Marxists found themselves in unity defending the changes brought about by the fallen Dubcek regime.⁴² Lochman also described that "the new solidarity between the Church and society was the curious symphony of all the church bells with all the factory sirens in August 1968, as an unanimous- though also disharmonious- confession of support for the program of democratic socialism."⁴³ But in the long run, the invasion did succeed in bringing a complete halt to the formal dialogue.

What was the future of Christian-Marxist dialogue in Czechoslovakia? Lochman still had confidence to believe that "the Czechoslovak experience remains a model of hope and of the future- for many of our Marxists and Christians in a Marxist society."⁴⁴ M.Machovec considered that the ending of institutional dialogue had not killed the principle of dialogue. He considered it as a

41. *Church in a Marxist Society*, p.12.

42. J.L.Hromadka, "The Situation in Czechoslovakia." In: *The World Year Book of Religion*, ed.Donald R.Cutler, Vol.2 (London: Evans Bros, 1982), pp.50-55.

43. *Church in a Marxist Society*, p.110.

44. *Ibid.*, p.198.

transformation from "show discussion" to theoretical studies on concrete subjects on Christianity by Marxists and vice versa. He urged that Christian-Marxist dialogue must draw from other traditions.⁴⁵ It was true that Christian-Marxist dialogue has entered a new stage since the 1970s. Christian-Marxist dialogue is no more the monopoly of Europe, East and West, but has extended to the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. But at the same time Christian-Marxist dialogue ceased in Prague after 1968. Marxism is no more an enduring ideology in eastern Europe. Then, are Hromadka's and Lochman's effort in Christian-Marxist dialogue futile? Does the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia imply that Christian-Marxist dialogue could only take place in the philosophical and intellectual level? Finally, is it naive to hold that Marxism is a human-oriented theory?

The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia seemed to destroy all the efforts of Christians and Marxists in Czechoslovakia. It seemed that, fatally, communism could not escape from the tendency to totalitarianism. But in reality the case of Czechoslovakia did not support these views. Firstly, J.B.Soucek wrote in April 1968: "It is clear that this change [the process of democratization] could have been initiated only from within the Communist Party itself."⁴⁶ To what extent did Christian-Marxist dialogue affect it? It was hard to give a concrete answer. But if the philosophy of Marxism is the foundation stone of a communist society, there is enough evidence to believe that the new understandings of Marxism can bring a new insight and stimulus to the Communist Government. Besides, Ludvik Svoboda—the President of Czechoslovakia—expressed the appreciation and

45. James Bentley, pp.154-158.

46. J.B.Soucek, "Churches in Czechoslovakia Today." In: *The Reformed and Presbyterian World*, Vol.XXX (1969), p.58.

gratitude of the highest representative of the State to all the churches for their stand in Spring and August. It was a tremendous change of attitude towards religion by a communist government.⁴⁷ Secondly, the downfall of the Dubcek's government did not logically imply the futility of Christian-Marxist dialogue in Czechoslovakia because the Soviet invasion was rather an expression of a powerful country over a powerless nation. It was a matter of imperialism. M.Machovec warned not to confuse humanistic socialism with exported armed socialism.⁴⁸ In the fall of 1989, the democratic fire once again sparkled in Czechoslovakia, and eventually the Communist Party was overthrown. Despite the downfall of the Communist Party, the people showed their welcome and respect to the return of Alexander Dubcek. In the election of June 10, 1990, the new and reformed Communist Party got 13.6% of the vote- the second largest party. All these showed that the effort of Christian-Marxist dialogue in the 1950's onward was not in vain.

47. *Church in a Marxist Society*, p.110.

48. *Ecumenical Press Service*, September 5, 1968, p.5.

D. Discussion

In chapters one and two, I have discussed Hromadka's and Lochman's theology and their responses in a communist context respectively. In this chapter, I have also examined their concrete contributions to the theological reflection in a communist society; that is, the Christian Peace Conference and the Christian-Marxist dialogue. It is time here to bring all the above discussions and observations together and to discern their significance for Christian witness in a communist context. In order not to confuse and mix up the theology of Hromadka and Lochman, I employ the term "*Prague-line Theology*" in a collective and general sense to refer to the basic emphases of their theological reflections. The Prague-line Theology traces its root back to the Bohemian Reformation and considers Marxism as a form of humanism instead of totalitarianism. It stresses the unconditional "YES" of the Gospel and encourages a positive and constructive involvement of the churches in a communist society. It is initiated by J.L.Hromadka, followed by J.M.Lochman, J.Smolik, and M.Opocensky. Each of them may vary in their degree of the understanding of Marxism and of the service of the Church in a communist context, but basically, they are unanimously in considering that the intention of Marxism is to be on the side of people.

In principle, I consider that the theological orientation of the Prague-line Theology is a form of political theology despite its lack of criticism of communist governments. According to Johannes B.Metz, the primary task of political theology is to deprivatize theology. That means that theology is not merely understood in the categories of the intimate, private, apolitical sphere and of no political relevance. Political theology is a theology of "praxis" rather than a matter of dogma and pure theory. It is also a positive attempt to

formulate the eschatological message within a particular social and historical setting. Metz writes, "Every eschatological theology, therefore, must become a political theology, that is, a [socio-] critical theology."¹ Alistair Kee considers that "the task of political theology has been, therefore, in the first instance to unmask the fact that Christianity has been assimilated to ideologies which are quite incompatible with it."² If I take these two understandings of what political theology is, then, I find that the Prague-line Theology is indeed a form of political theology.

Firstly, Hromadka's insistence on "taking history seriously" [sometimes, he was even criticized as a philosopher of history] and Lochman's emphasis on the fact that "the world provides our agenda" meet the central criterion of Metz's understanding of political theology. Neither Hromadka nor Lochman separate the Church from the world. They reject any tendency of ghettoism and privatizing the Gospel even though it is not easy at a time of suppression by the Communist Government. Secondly, their theology is a theology of "praxis". Hromadka insists on the "Gospel for atheists", while Lochman develops the "theology in the era of Cold War". These are not purely academic and intellectual theologies. Their theological reflection is expressed in practice in the Christian Peace Conference and in Christian-Marxist dialogue. Thirdly, their theological emphases meet the major task of Kee's understanding of political theology. Hromadka comments that "[the Church] lives, not by the pure source of faith, but by all sorts of ideas and alluvia, prejudices and views, which have arisen in the course of historical development, which have covered over the Biblical testimony and have become

1. See Alistair Kee ed., *The Scope of Political Theology* (London:SCM, 1978), pp.4-9.

2. Alistair Kee, *Constantine versus Christ* (London:SCM, 1982), p.166.

sanctified as inviolable and unerring truth. The theologian is obliged to sweep away this accumulation."³ Regarding confessionism and dogmatism, Lochman considers that "the words of the Father are not treated with free spiritual seriousness but we are *dead serious* about them. The Gospel and the faith are legalized. The truth of the living Lord Jesus Christ—who is ever again His own witness— is fixed—that means it is put at the disposal of the Church and its teaching office, and as a result, as something owned put into an opposition to other ideologies."⁴ Both Hromadka and Lochman accept the end of the Constantinian era and are not sorry for it. They frequently ask the Church to examine whether or not its theology is the ideology of a particular class. Their emphases are successful in removing "religion as the opium of the people".

The Prague-line Theology is also a "people's theology".⁵ In Hromadka's writings, phrases like "the Church ought to go down to where men are, and take herself their poverty, wretchedness, weakness and helplessness", "the Church descends with Him into the depth of present human distress and tension", and "the Church ought to understand the deepest depth of human misery, corruption and helplessness", appear frequently. Although all these words, such as, poverty, misery, distress, are rather vague and not specific, all of them indicate that the reality of the human situation is considered highly in Hromadka's thought. Who are the "people" in misery, distress and poverty? During the Wars, the people in misery and poverty in Hromadka's mind are chiefly understood in terms of economic

3. J.L.Hromadka, "The Responsibility and hopes of a theologian." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.V (1962), p.81.

4. J.M.Lochman, "Theology in an era of Cold war." In: *Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia*, Vol.VII (1960), p.56.

5. Here, I employ the meaning of "Minjung" of "Minjung Theology" of South Korea. "Minjung" means people, not the ordinary people but those who suffered, were exploited and outcast.

and social needs; that is, in relation to the attempt at building a socialist house. This house is for man, and man is not for this house. That is one of the reasons why he supports Marxism because it sides with the people and fights against exploitation. Since the 1960s, he puts the emphasis on the socialist man; that is, on protecting the sacredness of human personality and freedom. This change of emphasis does not necessarily rule out the other; it is rather a reflection of his response to a different time, and to different circumstances. While in Lochman's writings which first appeared in 1958, because of his involvement in the ecumenical movement, humanization is his major concern. This can be observed in his articles written at that time, such as, *"The Church and Society, Social Theology in a Revolutionary Age"*, *"Creativity and Freedom in a Human Society"*. Humanisation does not only mean challenge to economic injustice, but also to social and political injustice. During the "Prague Spring", he states firmly that humanization in a communist society means democratization. Each of their approaches to Christian witness regards mankind as their centre of concern; that is, the removal of all things which make man an oppressed, enslaved, destitute and despised being. In a sense, the reality of man is the hermeneutical principle of the Prague-line Theology for a primary concrete expression of important Christian concepts and realities.

The Prague-line Theology is in the paradox of the unconditional "YES" and the definitive "NO". The relationship between "YES" and "NO" can be understood as follows. Firstly, both Hromadka and Lochman consider that the first prophetic word must be a "YES", a persistent as well as a joyful "YES" to the Crucified and Risen Lord, who has put Christians in their situation. This "YES" is profoundly rooted in their understanding of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. This "YES"

does not deal with any social structure, but rather a promise of God. It is the "YES" with which God speaks to man.

Secondly, Hromadka considers that

the foremost mission of the Church has always been to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to men in the conditions and historical situation they live in. A faithful member of the Church has to take upon himself the burden of toil and sorrow, of responsibility and service to his fellow men, in love and compassion, without asking any reward or any benefit for himself. Only after he has done what he ought to have done may his "prophetic" word of criticism have a real meaning.⁶

If I understand rightly, the "NO" is based on the "YES" and the prophetic role of the Church is based on its priestly role. Without "Yes", that "NO" is meaningless even destructive; without priestly function, that prophetic role is only a self-righteousness expression.

Thirdly, the "YES" and "NO" is a relationship between service and domination. Hromadka writes that

It is difficult to know when it is necessary and just to accept the changes in the legal, material, and political orders even when they are being carried out in a harsh and hard way, and at the same time it is difficult to know when it is necessary to defend oneself and to protest against wrongs and injustices..... Only people with a deep spiritual culture and a fine understanding of reality are able to see into the proper character of the historical stream and co-operate with joy even in times when they themselves lose some of their material goods or social advantages and even when the level of the so-called upper strata has been lowered in order to create suitable conditions for the cultural and social ascent of a class involving millions and millions of persons who are still living on the edges of social and national life.⁷

Lochman also considers that

the unconditional love of God for man is curtailed by the Church when the Church wants to usurp the cause of Christ for itself, when it makes a claim to the authority of God, when it sees its calling not in service, but in domination.⁸

6. *Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia*, No.6, 1955, p.76.
7. J.L.Hromadka, "The Church of the Reformation Faces Today's Challenges." In: *Theology Today*, Vol.6 (1949), pp.455-456.
8. J.M.Lochman, "Theology in the era of Cold War." In: *Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia*, 1960, p.53.

The unconditional "YES" asks for an unconditional service to man. It is neither an easy-going nor a timid emphasis. Rather it is a response to the call for discipleship.

Fourthly, the unconditional "YES" allows concessions to communists in order to be able to influence them from day to day. The practical compromise on non-essential issues placed Hromádka in a unique position to entreat with communist officials quietly on behalf of many individuals and to try to make communism as humane as possible. It requires a discernment to decide whether their faith calls them to discreet compromise with the communist powers- that- be or to valiant opposition to rulers who have forfeited any claim to their allegiance. Alfredo Fierro rightly noted that

they [the Protestant authors] take for granted the contribution of believers to socialism; but they do not go so far as to elevate that co-operation to a theological category..... It is also evident in the writings of another Czech, Lochman, who is very reticent about the theology of revolution. While he does talk about the service to be rendered by the Church in a socialist society, he warns against any "theological vertigo" that might plunge us headlong into a socialist Christianity of very much the same stamp as the older Christianity of the medieval or bourgeois period.⁹

The unconditional "YES" means neither syncretism nor betrayal of one's faith.

Many criticize that the failure of the Prague-line Theology is to indicate precisely under what certain circumstances they can say the great "NO". I think that it is hard to draw a clear-cut line here. It is also what Lochman refuses to do which has been expressed in his understanding of "*Civilian Proclamation*". I consider that theology is not an instruction, but rather an indication. If it is mistaken, then theology becomes not only a law, but also an ideology. To say "NO" is

9. Alfredo Fierro, *The Militant Gospel* (London:SCM, 1977), p.218.

a decision of the people living at that particular time and in that particular space, and involving the deepest spiritual reflection.

Are the "Prague-line" theologians successful in their way of Christian witness? If success means that they finally establish a human-oriented communism, then, it is indeed failure. Or if success means that they convince communists to believe in the existence of God, then, it will also fail. I think the question is not that of success or failure in transforming communist governments or communists. But it is a matter of faithfulness and loyalty. Are they faithful to their calling and loyal to their Lord?

Firstly, in my introduction, I have stated that Christian witness should be understood in three ways. That is that its form is described as a theology of mission; its approach is seen as contextual as regards "*relevance*", "*comprehensiveness*" and "*practicability*"; its nature is that of a call for discipleship. I find that the Prague-line Theology is in this same direction. As regards theology of mission, the Prague-line theologians endeavour to avoid any tendency to privatise the Gospel. On the contrary, they unceasingly attempt to bring the Gospel into social life even though they are suppressed by the Communist Government. Besides, the Prague-line Theology is an attempt to find a relevant, comprehensive and practical theological response to a particular historical context. Its *relevance* is that it takes the historical context seriously. It is not an ivory-tower, abstract theology, but it is grounded in that particular time and space. Its *comprehensiveness* is that it pays attention to both the social and personal dimensions of, and the priestly and prophetic office of the Gospel. It rejects any tendency to interpret the Gospel solely in any one of these dimensions. The Cold War, the policy of

Communist Government suppression of religion and a one-sided criticism of communist governments led the Prague-line theologians saying less or even nothing against the injustice within a communist state. It is their great mistake, but its comprehensiveness should not be merely assessed in this aspect. The *practicability* of the Prague-line Theology is that it is not satisfied merely with its Biblical insights, but endeavours to carry them out in daily life. The most remarkable examples are the Christian Peace Conference and Christian-Marxist dialogue. Finally, the Prague-line Theology is never solely a social-oriented theology [horizontal dimension], but its social involvement is the result of the deepest understanding of the vertical dimension, that is, the relationship with God.

Secondly, loyalty can be understood on two levels which we may call the "*first loyalty*" and the "*second loyalty*".¹⁰ The first loyalty is shown by those who speak out the truth on behalf of the people even at the risk of death. The second loyalty is that of those who make some concessions to the government, not for the sake of their own safety but hoping to transform the government in another way. The difference between these two is not their ultimate purpose, but their way of achieving the same aim. [It is also what T. Beeson said in the title of his book "*Discretion and Valour*".] I consider that Hromadka

10. Due to the issue of 1997, the phrases "first loyalty" and "second loyalty" first appear in Hong Kong to describe those who do not leave and those who intend to leave Hong Kong respectively. There is an invisible antagonistic tension between them. In order to remove this unnecessary antagonism, some employ the phrase the "First Loyalty" to describe those who stay in Hong Kong and commit themselves to it even though they can leave, and employ the phrase the "Second Loyalty" to describe those whose leaving is not a matter of betrayal, but they choose an indirect way to serve Hong Kong because after they get the passport, they will return to Hong Kong. I employ these phrases here to say that there are two different kinds of people, even though their approaches may be totally different even contradictory, their basic intention is the same, that is, for the welfare of the people.

[and perhaps Lochman] is in the second category. His effort is to develop a Christian form of loyalty to a socialist society. He holds the premise that it is a Christian duty to seek the welfare of society in which one is placed, and that Christian loyalty need not mean a choice between either conformity to ideology or slavish submission in daily life. Here, I do not mean that the second loyalty is a possible alternative theological response in a hostile situation, but I reject any use of the "religious uniform code" to label somebody. That means that only the "first loyalty" is Christian witness.

After the Soviet invasion, J.Smolik wrote:

If it comes to the question with regard to Hromadka and his followers, among whom I count myself, of whether we should not have earlier denounced publicly the deformations of socialism, I will not defend myself by saying that we did so in a number of texts which could not be published in those days, but I will accept the question with a feeling of repentance as fraternal indication that we all are living only out of forgiveness.¹¹

This can be considered as a confession of Prague-line theologians. Even though we cannot find such a word of confession by Hromadka himself, we do not see any reason why he would not confess in the same way because repentance is the centre of his theology. I do not think that a fault in a person can eliminate all his achievements. No matter what criticism have been made on the Prague-line Theology for its lack of criticism of communist governments, these cannot hide its contributions, especially, by its leader, Hromadka. It has taught us about the crisis of man and the love of Christ which transcends all political boundaries. It has taught us that God's love applies to the communists as well as to the capitalists; it has reminded us of the Lordship of Christ which penetrates eastern Europe as much as the West; it has proclaimed to us the freedom of the Gospel which makes it

11. J.Smolik, "Philosophy of History." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.XII (1969), p.120.

possible to look any man in the face, correct him, but still essentially say "YES" to him, even when we disagree with him politically and theologically.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HONG KONG CHURCHES FACING 1997

A. Introduction

According to the Joint Declaration of the government of the People's Republic of China and the government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on the Question of Hong Kong, the People's Republic of China will resume the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong on July 1, 1997.¹ Historically, on the one hand, the Joint Declaration ends the history of unequal treaties², and on the other hand, this agreement marks the first time since the Munich agreement of 1938 that the government of a country with a pluralistic representative system has formally promised to hand over a territory and its populace to the government of a country with a system of totalitarian and single-party rule. Patriotically, the Joint Declaration ought to be welcomed enthusiastically by the people of Hong Kong because Hong Kong will no longer be a colony and the people living there do not need to sing the British National anthem: "*God save the Queen.*" July 1, 1997 is the date of the removal of the

1. The Joint Declaration also notes: a] after July 1, 1997, Hong Kong will become a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, that is, Hong Kong enjoys a high degree of autonomy; b] the government of Hong Kong which is supposed to be composed of local inhabitants, the current social and economic systems and the life style, including civil rights and freedom will remain unchanged for fifty years, until July 1, 2047, that is, "one country, two systems" and "people in Hong Kong govern Hong Kong".

Details see Jurgen Domes ed., *Hong Kong: a Chinese and International Concern* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), pp.249-266.

2. The unequal treaties are: a] after the defeat of China in the 1839-42 Opium War, China agreed to cede the island of Hong Kong to Great Britain in the 1842 Treaty of Nanking; b] after the defeat of China in the 1858-1860 Arrow War, China agreed to cede the southern part of the Kowloon Peninsula, about 3.5 square miles, to Great Britain by the 1860 Treaty of Peking; c] in 1898 China was compelled to lease to Great Britain an additional 365 square miles for 99 years. This part later was called the New Territories.

national shame. But in reality, many people in Hong Kong do not feel proud of it, just the opposite in fact. That is to say, fanatically, many of them are looking for emigration- for an exodus.

This search for an exodus is a social phenomenon, which has penetrated all professions, even the clergy, since the discussion of the future of Hong Kong began in 1982. According to a poll taken around 1985, of the 252 pastors polled, 18.1% were planning to emigrate. One can predict that by 1992 or 1993, 10% of Hong Kong's population [mostly bread-winners with skills and money], 1/5 of Hong Kong's Christians [a great many belonging to the lay leadership] and as many as 1/4 of Hong Kong's clergy and church workers [many with extensive pastoral experience] will be gone.³ The reason for their fear and insecurity is simply the lack of confidence in the Chinese Government. This lack of confidence is a result of their historical experience rather than a neurotic anxiety. Briefly speaking, about 40% of the population of Hong Kong comes from China and about 80% of the rest have family links with China. Accordingly, more than 80% of the population of Hong Kong have suffered directly or indirectly from the Chinese regime since the 1950s; that is to say, from the "*Hundred Flowers Movement*", the "*Great Leap Forward*" and the "*Cultural Revolution*".⁴ It is understandable that many people in Hong Kong project their painful and grievous experiences in the past on to the

3. *Hong Kong Christian Institute Newsletter*, March, 1990, p.1.

4. The "Hundred Flowers Movement" happened in the late 1950s. Mao encouraged people to criticize the mistakes of the government in order to improve it. But after one year, all whose made criticisms were arrested and imprisoned and were charged with being a danger to the country. The "Great Leap Forward" was an attempt to accelerate the economic development of China in the mid 1950s. But practically, the people suffered a lot because of the failure of its reform. The "Cultural Revolution" started in 1966 which was a struggle of leadership. Ten years of the "Cultural Revolution" retarded China's development by ten years. These movements brought many people from China to Hong Kong, especially during the early 1960s.

situation after 1997. Thus, the changeover of political sovereignty does not only result in a crisis of confidence, but also means that the unhealed historical "*wound*" comes to the surface once again. People are not afraid of suffering, but they are afraid of meaningless suffering. This "*wound*" cannot be healed solely by the Chinese Government's guarantee that Hong Kong will remain unchanged for fifty years after 1997, but requires also the transformation of the Chinese Government itself.

Even though many people in Hong Kong have never experienced what life is like under communist rule, communism is not strange to them. Many people in Hong Kong perhaps do not know the Early Marx, but their concrete daily experiences of communism are more real than the theory of communism. It does not matter that historically the Chinese communists worked for the people during the 1930s and the 1940s, and that theoretically, communism sounds good with its aim to remove of all alienations and exploitations. The experiences of many people in Hong Kong show that the Chinese Government is only a form of totalitarian and dictatorial government. After the Tienanmen Square Massacre on June 4, 1989, the confidence which the Chinese Government attempted to build in the last ten years was totally shattered; even Marxists in Hong Kong resigned their membership of the Chinese Communist Party in disillusionment. The history of the Communist Party in the People's Republic of China has never convinced many people in Hong Kong that it is reliable, honourable or on the side of people.

In the following sections, I shall firstly discuss the relevance of Hromadka and Lochman to the churches in Hong Kong; secondly, I shall analyze the response of the people and the churches in Hong Kong

in the shadow of 1997; and finally, I shall attempt to make a theological reflection in the context of facing 1997 and in the light of the above study.

B. The relevance of Hromadka and Lochman

In the above very brief introduction to the situation of Hong Kong in the shadow of 1997, it may be argued that the struggles of Hromadka and Lochman in Czechoslovakia are irrelevant to those that the churches in Hong Kong will face in 1997. Firstly, their insistence on Marxism as an age-long yearning for social justice is completely contradicted by the experience of the people of Hong Kong. Secondly, they believed that Marxism could be transformed from within; that is to say, totalitarianism would not be the end of it. This may have been true in the case of Czechoslovak communism in the late 1960s but 40 years history of the Chinese Communist Government shows no sign that it is willing to give up its one-party monopoly. For instance, the Tienanmen Square Massacre fully reveals its rigidity and its fear of losing power. Thirdly, during the 1940s to the 1960s, their struggle in Czechoslovakia may be considered as far-sighted because they tried to de-ideologize Marxism and avoid unnecessary misunderstandings between Christians and Marxists. But the movement of democratization in eastern Europe which erupted in autumn 1989 proves that *"socialism with a human face"* is too late in the 1990s. The ideal of communism can no longer compensate for the mistakes made by communist governments. Fourthly, they regarded communism as a judgment of God which called the Church and the so-called *"Christian"* nations for repentance. It is undeniable that the Church and the West should be responsible for the shortcomings in their history. Yet history does not only show the failures of the Church and the West; it also discloses the brutality and the violation of human rights of some communist governments. Thus, the Church should simultaneously repent and unmask the hypocrisy of communist governments. Fifthly, the model of *"opposition to"* communist governments may prove more appropriate and relevant to the churches in Hong Kong, such as, that of the Roman

Catholic Church in Poland.¹ A critical response towards communist governments seems to be more applicable than the constructive co-operative attitude, since at the moment Hong Kong still has freedom of speech.

The above points show the divergences of historical and social context between Czechoslovakia and Hong Kong. They warn us not to adopt blindly and transplant confusedly their [Hromadka and Lochman] ways of coping with a communist government into Hong Kong context without taking the historical differences into consideration. Any attempt at transplanting does no good to the churches or to the people of Hong Kong; it would even bring them harm. But the dialogue between Czechoslovakia and Hong Kong does not halt here. A possible convergence shall be found between the theological views and responses of Hromadka, Lochman and those of Christians in Hong Kong. I believe that their [Hromadka and Lochman] experience can be an enlightenment to the churches in Hong Kong facing 1997. I shall illustrate below the relevance of their struggle for a true Christian witness in the Czechoslovak context to the theological and ecclesiastical situation of the churches in Hong Kong.

Christian witness should demand, first of all, an examination of one's own faith. Both Hromadka and Lochman asserted that the churches lost their inner independence because they frequently identified with a definite political and social order.² Facing a communist government

1. In February, 1990, a Polish Catholic theologian Ms. Halina Bortnowska was invited to visit Hong Kong to share her church struggle in Poland under the communist regime. 200 showed up for the pastors' conference. 700 and 1100 attended the two open meetings respectively. Generally speaking, her visit got a wide support of the churches and the churches in Hong Kong are identified with her views.
2. J.M.Lochman, "Theology in an era of Cold War." In: *Protestant Churches in Czechoslovakia*, Vol.VII (1960), p.54. Hromadka's view, see pp.55-56.

which was hostile to the churches, Hromadka and Lochman questioned whether the churches' negative reaction towards it arose from faith or from [their] middle-class ideology. An examination of one's own faith is a struggle against the incompatible ideology which penetrates the Church. "*We need not be afraid of a godless world but of a godless and unbelieving church*" is at the heart of their reflection of Christian witness.³ The Church is not a privileged institution, but rather a *Communio Viatorum*.

This emphasis brings an understanding of Christian witness in a communist context in two ways. Firstly, Christian witness is not a struggle for an external form of existence of the Church, but is a struggle of the Church to be the Church. It does not mean that the external existence— what we often call religious freedom— is unimportant, but that it is only secondary. Theologically, religious freedom comes from God's grace, not from the grace of a political power. Here is a dimension of freedom which cannot be guaranteed by any political system but, for that very reason, cannot be taken away by it either. It opens up, even in the conditions of bondage, "gaps of freedom" which cannot be closed by any earthly power. Furthermore, freedom is not only a movement from the outside towards the inside, from external conditions, but also from the inside towards the outside, as initiatives of freedom by groups and individuals. That is why in the threshold of the end of the Constantinian order, both Hromadka and Lochman did not consider that it was a danger for the existence of the Church. Because of this understanding, the Church can keep an open mind towards the future no matter how hard or difficult the situation might be and avoid an unconscious "sell out"

3. J.L.Hromadka, "The Church's Dependence on God and its Independence from Man." In: *Student World*, Vol.XLVIII (1955), p.6.

of the substance of its faith. Secondly, Christian witness is not to encourage or give one reasons to criticize, but calls for repentance and discipleship. It is an error to suggest that Christian witness in a communist context should solely emphasize its prophetic mission to criticize communist governments, and not to see that there is also a divine call for it to repent and discipleship.⁴ It is true that the prophetic and priestly office should not be separated, but the starting points of Christian witness are "YES" and "AMEN". It should be remembered that whenever the Church communicates the entire Gospel, it brings itself to change in the process. No church which is involved in true mission ever remains unchanged. It discovers its inadequacy and new depths of discipleship.

Christian witness should take its social responsibility seriously and should reject deliberately the tendency of ghettoism. After February 1948, Hromadka's friend wrote to him saying: "I still believe that there is nothing else to be done than to withdraw from the public life and devote one's own energy to deeper study of the Bible and to a more vigorous witness of our faith."⁵ This is a very typical view adopted by many Christians in unfavourable situations, especially during times of suppression and uncertainty. Christians are apt to fall into the tendency of privatizing the Gospel, and thus disregard any of its direct political and social relevance. This tendency can be explained by the need, on the one hand, of persons who suffer from unfair treatment for inward comfort and consolation, and by the fact, on the other hand, that it is inadvisable to have a direct confrontation with an unjust government.

4. See pp.61-63 and 93.

5. J.L.Hromadka, "Between Yesterday and Tomorrow." In: *Theology Today*, Vol.5 (1948), p.276.

For Hromadka and Lochman, Christian witness is neither a struggle for an academic view of faith nor a struggle for personal pietism, but is a call for social involvement. That means that the Church is for the world. This is fully revealed in Hromadka's writings, such as "*The Service of Theology*" and "*The Responsibility and Hopes of a Theologian*" and in Lochman's writings, such as "*Historical Events and Ethical Decisions*".⁶ They see things from God and for God. They see the world as in the presence of God. Faith in God and his kingdom make them refuse to accept the world as it is. Faith will not let them leave the world. That is why Hromadka stressed the need to take history seriously and Lochman emphasized the relationship between historical events and ethical decisions.⁷ They tried to find the "meaning" of history in terms of its significance, not of its direction. Therefore, Christian witness is to try its best to relate its faith in both personal and social dimensions. This is the responsibility of the Church. The Church cannot be free in self-isolation from the people and from the world. Otherwise, the Word of God would become abstract and vague- "*the opium of the people*". But they are aware that the Word of God and the reaction of faith go beyond any human categories, and cannot be reduced to the rational, moral and practical level of human life. Its involvement may be unwelcome and regarded by communist governments as an intervention of politics or by anti-communist Christians as opportunist. But the Church is not afraid of that criticism because the Church and the people of its time cannot be separated in origin. This is the Church at this particular time and in that particular space.

6. J.L.Hromadka, "The Service of Theology." In: *Communio Viatorum*, Vol.III (1960), pp.133-137;
 "The Responsibility and Hopes of a Theologian." In:
 Communio Viatorum, Vol.V (1962), pp.79-87.
 J.M.Lochman, "Historical Events and Ethical Decisions." In:
 Theology Today, Vol.21 (1964), pp.206-219.
7. See pp.67-68 and 99-102.

Christian witness should be based on solidarity with the people for whom it is intended.⁸ This solidarity is not a purely human philanthropy. It is rooted in the incarnation of God; that is, the Servanthood of Jesus Christ.⁹ This understanding calls the Church to follow the Lord of Heaven and Earth where he goes— from the garden of Eden into the wilderness of human sin, the depth of human suffering, the abyss of human helplessness and the hell of human despair— and to be identified with its fellowmen even where all natural or ideological sympathy stops; where there is no longer visible natural or ideological reason for it; where there is only the threat of walls and abysses of traditional enmity. Thus, solidarity calls for the Church to abandon its privileges and its prejudices because it is a servant. In this light, solidarity has a threefold meaning. Firstly, solidarity is never an intellectual form of identification, but demands a personal involvement. That is why Hromadka left his good position in the United States and returned to Czechoslovakia in 1947, and Lochman returned from Basel to Prague even after the February event in 1948. Secondly, it is not an exclusive solidarity. Its ministry includes Marxists. That is why both Hromadka and Lochman stressed the "*Gospel for atheists*".¹⁰ Thirdly, solidarity does not mean that the Church is the navigator and liberator of the world. On the contrary, the Church is part of the people and is searching the way together with its contemporaries. This is what Lochman said about "*Socratic evangelism*".¹¹ Because of the light of eschatology, their

8. J.L.Hromadka, *Das Evangelium auf dem Wege Zum Menschen* (Witten:Luther, 1963).

J.M.Lochman, "The Church and the Humanization of Society." In: *Union Seminary Review*, Vol.24 (1969), pp.136-139.

9. See pp.56-59 and 96-99.

10. J.L.Hromadka, "Gospel for Atheist." In: *Risk*, Vol.1, No.1 (1965). J.M.Lochman, *Church in a Marxist Society* (London:SCM, 1970), pp.154-169.

11. See p.93.

emphasis on solidarity is never a "*messianic humanism*", but rather a "*humanist messianism*".¹²

Christian witness should promote reconciliation among nations and peoples. In the era of hatred and antagonism, the Church should never exacerbate mistrust, but rather sow the seed of peace. During the 1950s and the 1960s in Czechoslovakia, religious antagonism arose from two sources. On the one hand, from Marxists who regarded the churches as a danger to society and thus adopted different methods to suppress the churches' influence on society. And, on the other hand, from the churches who regarded Marxists as the anti-Christ and discouraged any form of co-operation with them. Politically, the Cold War was the result of mutual suspicion on the part of two great camps- the Soviet Union and the United States. Unfortunately, the ideology of the Cold War also penetrated the churches. A clear, antagonistic dualism took place. In this unhealthy situation, Hromádka initiated the Christian-Marxist dialogue which was later carried on by Lochman, and established the Christian Peace Conference. The aim of the Christian-Marxist dialogue was to remove the mistrust and misunderstanding between Marxists and Christians in a country under a communist regime,¹³ and that of the Christian Peace Conference was to improve the mutual understanding and relation among Christians and nations in the East and the West of Europe.¹⁴ Even though some may criticize the Christian Peace Conference as being a mouthpiece of communist governments, no one can deny that it was a concrete attempt to express what reconciliation is.

12. See pp.162-164.

13. See pp.148-158.

14. See pp.139-148.

Christian witness should exert its ministry of hope in a suffering and unjust situation. In order to avoid a one-sided view of Christian hope either as irrelevant to the present world or as a human effort to establish the Kingdom of God, Christian hope should be understood as "*individual*" but "*not private*", as "*already*" but "*not-yet*".¹⁵ In a communist country, citizens were frequently treated badly and unfairly. In the book "*Church in a Marxist Society*", Lochman recorded different stories concerning how people were treated unfairly by the Czechoslovak Communist Government.¹⁶ These stories were not exceptional, but were rather typical. Facing a situation full of frustration and suffering, it is important for the Church to exercise the office of guardian of hope in pastoral care and in politics. Pastorally, Christian hope cares for people's suffering and frustration and consoles their grievance. It takes each person's suffering seriously. It listens to each person's story sincerely. Christian hope is not a psychological comfort, but is rooted in the presence and promise of Jesus Christ. Christian hope does not provide an illusory optimism for the people, but strengthens them to face reality and walk forward courageously. Politically, Christian hope insists on the permanent relation of the world inherent in the salvation merited by Jesus, a relation not to be understood only in a natural-cosmological sense but also in a socio-political one; that is, a critical, liberating force with regard to the social world and its historical process. It forces Christians to assume their responsibility towards society. The ethical and political consequences of this orientation are that sharing in Jesus Christ leads to sharing in the helplessness of people and breaks down all belief of political absolutism and fatalism. After the Soviet

15. It is the eschatological view largely held by the Hussite during the time of Bohemian Reformation. See pp.103-106.

16. *Church in a Marxist Society*, pp.86-94.

invasion of Czechoslovakia, both Hromadka and Lochman stressed that Christians should not give up.¹⁷

Finally, Christian witness should have the courage to take sides. The Church often prefers to be neutral in all controversial matters because taking sides could easily be understood as conformism or opportunism and bears the risk of making mistakes. But its neutrality is already a form of taking sides; that is to say, indifference, and sitting on the wall. Christian witness will only be concrete and real through taking sides. Taking sides does not necessarily require adopting a political standpoint, but rather representing the people with whom it stands. Hromadka's one-sidedness can be viewed negatively as a mistake because he concealed the weakness of communist governments and only over-emphasized their good side.¹⁸ This criticism is undeniably right. But it should be noted that his one-sidedness arose from an attitude of empathy and solidarity with his contemporaries facing starvation and economic exploitation. His one-sidedness put his name at risk. Lochman explained that "his [Hromadka's] one-sidedness must be understood precisely in this connection: As an attempt to defend the freedom of the Church against the temptation of an unfruitful negativism in the light of the revolutionary breakup of the Constantinian order."¹⁹ Hromadka's one-sidedness had historical bounds. That was the time when churches fiercely opposed Marxism without taking any consideration of their own weakness, and that was the world which was full of suffering and starvation. Hromadka bore the criticisms in order to support the Czechoslovak Communist Government for the purpose of a better and more socially just society. Whether or not we agree with Hromadka's one-

17. See p.133.

18. See pp.79-80.

19. *Church in a Marxist Society*, p.63.

sidedness and accept Lochman's explanation, one thing is sure: that Hromadka's one-sidedness was never a cowardly and selfish action but rather an act of courage. That is to say, he chose to stand with the communists in order to work for a better and just society.²⁰

Christian witness is not an aggregate of all the above emphases. Neither is it an academic work nor a set of regulations. Rather, Christian witness is a practical and contextual interpretation of what "*Kerygma*" and "*Diakonia*" mean. It is rooted in the historical context and social circumstances of that time. Hromadka's and Lochman's understanding are contextualized, and have a significance of universality. That is to say, I find that these six emphases have special meanings for the churches of Hong Kong facing 1997. As far as I am concerned, they teach the churches in Hong Kong that: firstly, a living faith requires an unceasing contextualization, so that the Christian belief can be specific and concrete. It can only be done by taking the unique needs of its society seriously [taking history seriously]. Otherwise, Christian belief would remain a theory and an ideal. Secondly, God's revelation needs to be listened to, understood, recognized, interpreted and responded to at each particular time and in each particular space. The witness of the Church is to help the people to realize God's marks in history clearly and to respond to God's word in this generation diligently. In addition, the responsibility of the Church is always to draw a clear and distinctive line between the voice of the Living God and the various human voices and claims which have penetrated the Church. Thirdly, they teach us that the only valid measure of progress in society is human freedom and dignity. This is not understood either by economic freedom or by political freedom, but by both. In

20. See pp.137-138.

conclusion, the relevance of Hromadka and Lochman to the Hong Kong churches is in the relationship of stimulation rather than a direct application; that is, their way of doing theology, their faith in God and their unceasing commitment to humanity. That is why Lochman wrote: "My hope is that this account of the Czechoslovak experience [that is, he refers to his book *Church in a Marxist Society*] might help us all to serve men in our different churches and societies with new imagination, humility and courage [bold mine]."²¹ This is what I would like to take up in the following sections.

21. *Church in a Marxist Society*, p.14.

C. Hong Kong in the shadow of 1997

An appropriate theological reflection on the context of the churches in Hong Kong facing 1997 needs to examine the situation of Hong Kong and to listen to the pulse of the people living there. It is not my purpose here to give a full historical or sociological survey of the significance of 1997, a complete political or an economic analysis of what will be happening in Hong Kong after 1997. What I want to do is, firstly, to describe and analyze what 1997 means to the people of Hong Kong and how it influences the social life of Hong Kong in the meantime, and secondly, to discuss the reaction of the churches in Hong Kong as they face 1997.

The issue of 1997 reveals a mysterious mother-daughter relationship between China and Hong Kong. It is totally manifested in the responses of many people in Hong Kong towards the Chinese Government's proposal of "*One Country, Two Systems*" which will be introduced into Hong Kong after 1997.¹ From the Chinese Government's perspective, "*One Country, Two Systems*" is a great contribution and concession made by the Chinese Government towards the people of Hong Kong. The people of Hong Kong are supposed to accept its proposal with thanks because historically, the Chinese Government is accustomed to the practice of the concentration of power- dictatorship. But in reality, the responses of many people in Hong Kong are not as positive as may be expected. Some even suggest that the British Government should administer Hong Kong in return for the acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China over Hong Kong.

1. The Chinese Government promises that after 1997, Hong Kong can still maintain its existing status quo and lifestyle, that is, capitalism. Deng XiaoPing guarantees that after 1997, "Horse-racing and dancing still continue in Hong Kong". According to Hong Kong context, "Horse-racing" means gambling and "Dancing" means nightlife. In his eyes, these two are the characteristics of the Hong Kong society.

Besides, discussions concerning "*One Country, Two Systems*" among many people in Hong Kong are only concentrated on the possibility and the validity of "*Two systems*", while "*One country*" is left out in their agenda. Their lack of interest in a discussion of the concept "*One country*" cannot simply be understood as an acceptance that it does not have any room for discussion. On the contrary, the lack of interest reflects the fact that many people in Hong Kong do not want Hong Kong to revert to China because in a sense, they do not regard the People's Republic of China as their motherland.² This is hardly understood by the Chinese in the People's Republic of China. On the other hand, their lack of interest shows that many people in Hong Kong do not quite understand what "*One Country, Two Systems*" actually means. The issue is not how to keep "*Two Systems*" valid, but how "*One Country*" is to be fulfilled. Therefore, "*One Country*" is the first, while "*Two Systems*" is only secondary. Historically, Hong Kong is a part of China. Nationally, the people of Hong Kong claim themselves as Chinese. But in reality, it is more appropriate to call them "*HongKongese*" [if there is such a word] instead of Chinese. National identity is not a problem for them. That is why they are called the people without roots.³ Therefore, the major issue of 1997 is not a matter of which government governs Hong Kong, but rather which government can protect the existing social and economic life of Hong Kong.

The reaction of the people and of the churches in Hong Kong towards 1997 may be explained by psychological theories concerning the

2. M.K.Yeung, *Theology of Reconciliation and the Renewal of Church* (Hong Kong: Seed Press, 1987), pp.400-416.

3. Their rootlessness cannot be simply criticized as shame. It is because the people of Hong Kong have a confusion of dual national loyalty; that is, the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. Moreover, under the British colonial rule and education system, people are trained to be submissive and politically cool.

process of bereavement.⁴ Generally speaking, a shock is the immediate response of one's facing a sudden change of environment, such as, the death of spouse. This stage is characterized by confusion and depression. At the same time, one tries to control one's grievous emotion and falls into a tendency of regression of one's social life. This is the second stage: Self-control. The third stage is the transitional period which is marked by "*trial and error*". That means that one tries different methods regardless of success or failure in order to have a breakthrough of one's situation or to get one's expected answer. When all attempts fail, one enters the last stage. This is the stage in which one recognizes the reality and accepts the fact. Moreover, one attempts to re-organize one's life in order to adapt to the new situation. This psychological model of the process of bereavement is individually based. This cannot fully explain the collective experience; that is, the psychological reaction of the people and the churches in Hong Kong towards the issue of 1997. However, it still gives us some inkling to understand the situation of both the people and the churches in Hong Kong.

The negotiations beginning in September 1982 between the Chinese Government and the British Government on the future of Hong Kong had brought a great shock to the people of Hong Kong. It was reflected by the facts that Hong Kong currency depreciated from US\$1:HK\$4.8 to US\$1:HK\$10 within two weeks and all the shelves in supermarkets were empty.⁵ After a short period of self-control [the Government urged the people to remain calm], many people in Hong Kong tried different methods to find an outlet to the situation, such as, emigration, requests and protests.⁶ After the announcement of the Joint

4. W.Oates, *Anxiety in Christian Experience* (Philadelphia, 1958), pp.48-55.

5. M.K.Yeung, p.507.

6. Ibid., p.507.

Declaration in 1984, many people in Hong Kong were still in the stage of "*trial and error*". In the late 1980s, the people of Hong Kong were supposed to enter the final stage of bereavement; that is, to re-organize themselves to adapt a new situation. The Tienanmen Square Massacre on June 4, 1989 put the people of Hong Kong into another bereavement. The historical "*wound*" reappeared. The shock of Tienanmen Square led to two great marches. The first had one million people participating, about one-sixth of the population and the second one was estimated about 1.5 million people, about one-fourth of the population.⁷ An article commented: "The people of Hong Kong have finally been sentimentally awakened, with a deep and happily aroused feeling that they are the *descendants of the dragon*, that what runs in the veins of their bodies is the warm blood of the Chinese people..... The people of Hong Kong will never be the same again, politics cool and no national identity."⁸ Did this comment reflect the shock of or the self-awareness of the people there? It is not an easy question and it takes time to answer.

It cannot be denied that many people in Hong Kong now realize that China and Hong Kong are no longer two independent lands. Their destiny and future are linked together because they are in the same boat. The future of China is not only in the hands of the Chinese in the People's Republic of China, but the responsibility also lies in the people of Hong Kong because they are also Chinese. The Tienanmen Square Incident led many people in Hong Kong to learn and study Chinese culture, history and politics seriously. This tendency is not the same as the "*China's hot*"—a curiosity about China—in the early 1970s, but in the sense of solidarity. Furthermore, many people in Hong Kong realize that democracy does not only mean that "my voice

7. *Yi: China Message*, Vol.III, June 1989, p.22.

8. *Ibid.*, p.22.

counts in the governing of public affairs" but also that what the government does shall be for the common good; and so the concern for democratization moves from self-interest to concern for the common good. On the other hand, the Tienanmen Square Massacre deepened the antagonistic attitude between China and Hong Kong, accelerated the speed of emigration and slowed down local and foreign investment. Furthermore, the wide support of the people of Hong Kong for the democratization movement in Beijing aroused the anger of the Chinese Government. For instance, the Chinese Government openly warned the people of Hong Kong- "*The water of the well should not meddle in the water of the river*"⁹- and refused to pass the democratization law in Hong Kong.¹⁰ In the coming years, we believe that Hong Kong will become more politicized than before, and its relationship with China may become more acute. More importantly, the Tienanmen Incident helps the people of Hong Kong to have no illusion towards the Chinese Government. It is extremely important for the final stage of bereavement.

The issue of 1997 has had a great impact on Hong Kong's social life as a whole. Firstly, there is the serious problem of the "brain drain" and the vacuum of leadership brought by emigration. According to a poll taken in January 1989 and June 1989 respectively, there is an increase in numbers planning to emigrate from 48% to 64% among professions, entrepreneurs and administrators, and from 40% to 75% among

9. "The water of the well" means Hong Kong and "the water of the river" means China. But the response of the people of Hong Kong is, "We are more afraid that the water of the river meddles in the water of the well than your fear."

10. No universal suffrage to elect the chief executive and all the legislators earlier than 2012, and that would come only if a referendum so desires, subject to the endorsement of the National People's Congress in Beijing. This has been put into the Basic Law with the agreement of the British Government. See "Hong Kong." In: *Comment*, Catholic Institute of International Relation, September 1990, p.23.

factory owners.¹¹ It is estimated that 10%-15% of the whole population will emigrate before 1997. In addition, countries like Singapore and even East Germany, have softened their immigration laws to allow more people from Hong Kong opportunities for resettlement. The direct effects are that, positively, there will be more chances for young people to develop and be promoted [provided that they are convinced it is worth to stay in Hong Kong], and negatively, there is a serious shortage of manpower among all careers.¹² This seriously damages the normal functioning of society. Although the Hong Kong Government tries to persuade those emigrants back to Hong Kong, many of those who return do so mainly because they want to make money rather than because they are committed to Hong Kong. Thus, if there is any change in the Hong Kong society, they will be the first ones to leave.

Secondly, there is a pessimistic atmosphere around Hong Kong. Because of the future uncertainty, many people in Hong Kong have become more materialistic, hedonistic, short-sighted or religious [superstitious], especially, those who are not qualified to emigrate. Because of their fear of Communist China, many people spend their earnings now in order to enjoy it. Their slogan is: "*Without property against shared properties*."¹³ Moreover, many people eagerly look for consolation and indication from religions and fortune-telling. This is a time of the revival of Chinese folk religions and Japanese Buddhism.¹⁴

11. Sze by Hong Kong Christian Institute, November 1989, p.2.

12. Because of the shortage of labour, the Hong Kong Government allows more than fifteen thousands people from China to work in Hong Kong in 1989.

13. Literally, the chinese translation of communism is "shared properties". This slogan reflects the helplessness and hopelessness of the people.

14. Sze by Hong Kong Christian Institute, November 1989, p.11.

Thirdly, there is an invisible antagonism among the Chinese Government, the British Government and the people of Hong Kong, between reformists and conservatives in Hong Kong, and between emigrants and those who cannot and do not leave.¹⁵ That is to say, both the Chinese Government and the people of Hong Kong accuse each other of intervention in each other's internal affairs.¹⁶ Both the British and Chinese governments accuse each other of contravening the Sino-British Declaration.¹⁷ The people of Hong Kong accuse the British Government of selling them out in the matters of political reform and nationality. The conservatives accuse the reformists of rocking the boat, while the reformists accuse the conservatives of being conformists or opportunists. Those who cannot and do not emigrate accuse the emigrants as betrayers. This antagonistic attitude becomes more acute and breaks down the solidarity among the people of Hong Kong.

Fourthly, because of the nearness of 1997, many people in Hong Kong pay more attention to the macro dimension of the society- the economic and political issue- rather than the micro dimension- the social welfare of the people. Furthermore, it is estimated that the economic situation of Hong Kong will be less prosperous than before and may even be depressed in the coming years. In the coming years, the low-income people may be those who suffer from, and sacrifice for, the political and democratic movement. Facing the issue of 1997, what are the responses of the churches in Hong Kong?

15. "Hong Kong." In: *Comment*, Catholic Institute of International Relations, September 1990, pp.16-18, 24-25.

16. The Chinese Government accuses the people of Hong Kong of supporting the democratization movement in June 1989, whilst the Hong Kong people accuse the Chinese Government of threatening to annul or not recognize any democratic reform in Hong Kong now after 1997.

17. China criticized Britain for its Bill of Rights, for its nationality package and for wanting to increase the number of elected seat on Legislative Council.

Before discussing the churches' reaction to the issue of 1997, it is worthwhile to give an overview of the churches in Hong Kong. About 10% of the 5.7 million population of Hong Kong are Christians. Even though there is no written definite religious policy in Hong Kong, the people of Hong Kong enjoy a great extent of religious freedom. Furthermore, because it is a British colony, the churches of Hong Kong in a sense enjoy more privileges than other religious institutions from the Government. According to one estimation, the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches together now have more than 800 congregations and more than 200 Christian organizations or institutions. Together they provide more than 40% of the school places, 60% of the social welfare work and almost 20% of the hospital beds for the wider community.¹⁸ Though Christians are not a large proportion, they play a very significant role in the Hong Kong social welfare system. One thing should be noted while the churches provide many services, they are only the trustees and administrators. That means that the Government finances all the services, such as, salaries of teachers, nurses, social workers, and administrative expenses. This relationship can not be regarded as a form of the Constantinian order. It is because the Hong Kong Government neither meddles in the Church's internal policy nor needs the Church's affirmation of its authority. I would rather say that this is a relationship of mutual-use. That is to say, through monetary support the Government shifts its responsibility for society to the churches. In return, the churches can use these chances for evangelism. Although both sides benefit from this relation, there are still some tensions between the churches and the Government. In the latter part 1989, Rev. Kwok Nai Wang openly commented on that relationship as follows:

18. *Hong Kong Christian Institute Newsletter*, March 1990, p.2.

The denomination heads spend a good deal of time in bureaucratic work, [that is, the management of schools and social welfare.] They have no time to study and to reflect. Moreover, because the status quo is beneficial to them, they try to avoid getting involved in controversial and political issues [which tend to rock the boat, so to speak]. So majority of the denomination heads can no longer lead..... They have lost the moral courage to be prophets and pastors; at least they can be considered institutional technocrats.¹⁹

His comment is also shared by Dr. Peter Lee- Director of the Hong Kong Christian Study Center- saying:

The so-called mainline Protestant denominations have a dried-up spirituality and they lack spiritual resources to liberate what puts them and society under captivity.²⁰

How far do their comments reflect the real situation? It can only be answered by those church-leaders.

Facing the issue of 1997, the Hong Kong churches cannot be spectators. Despite what theological positions they hold, they cannot escape its influence on them. Like the psychological theories concerning the process of bereavement, the Hong Kong churches must also go through this process. In the following, I will discuss the immediate response of the Protestant churches towards the issue of 1997- the first three stages of bereavement- and the more mature response- the final stage of bereavement.

Generally speaking, the immediate response of the Hong Kong churches towards the issue of 1997, between 1982 and 1986, could be observed in three ways. Firstly, it is the external reaction of the Hong Kong churches. In order to understand the reaction of the churches in Hong Kong to 1997, it is important to study the religious

19. Ibid., p.2.

Rev. Kwok previously was the general secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council. He resigned in 1988 in protest the allegedly cowardly attitude of the Hong Kong Christian Council concerning the issue of 1997. Details can be seen in Ecumenical Press Service, 88.04.34.

20 See *Ching Feng*, Vol.32, 1989, p.170.

policies of the Chinese Government since the 1950s,²¹ since the churches in Hong Kong project the Chinese churches experiences in the 1950s onwards on to the situation of Hong Kong after 1997. In principle, they considered the Chinese Government was against religion and could not be trusted. The "Three-Self Movement" was used by the Chinese Government as an agent to get control of the churches. Therefore, the responses of the churches in Hong Kong was mainly that of "mending the net"; that is, how to minimize the possibility of the Chinese Government's intervention of churches' affairs. One distinctive example was *"Hong Kong Protestant Manifesto on Religious Freedom and Religious Policy"* which was issued by 12 Protestant denominations in September 1984.²² Concerning the personal level, it states: ".....Freedom to choose denomination, theological position and liturgy....."; concerning the family level, it states: ".....Freedom to conduct worship and religious education at home....."; concerning the activity of the churches, it states: ".....Freedom to use electronic media, such as movies, radio, gramophone records, recording tapes, video tapes, slides, etc. for the production and broadcast of evangelism and spiritual nurture programmes....."; ".....freedom to run educational institutions such as kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, post-secondary colleges, vocational training schools, etc....."; ".....freedom to establish and maintain links and share resources with individuals and church organisations inside and outside Hong Kong under the principle of mutual respect....." and ".....freedom to own and run cemeteries....."

21. See Bob Whyte, *Unfinished Encounter* (London:Collins, 1988), pp.194-305.

22. Details see *Ecumenical Press Service*, 1984.9.62.

This Manifesto got the support of 12 denominations. They are as follows: Anglican, United Church of Christ in China, Methodist, Lutheran, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Assembly of God[2], Salvation Army, Seventh-Day Adventist, Pentecostal Missionary, Bethany and Church of God.

It is obvious that the Manifesto itself is a response to the Three-Self policy of the Chinese Government towards the Protestant churches in China. On the one hand, the Manifesto is an attempt at clarifying the ambiguous understanding of religious freedom and religious policy with the Chinese Government. On the other hand, it shows the self-interest and self-centeredness of the Protestant churches, and fails to understand religious freedom in a wider context of human rights. I do not mean to use the theme of human rights to conceal the interest of religious freedom of the churches, but rather the Manifesto should emphasize that human rights and religious freedom are complementary and inseparable from each other. Furthermore, the Manifesto is a so-called "*Christian*" form of religious freedom because it excludes the pluralistic dimension of the Chinese culture. It is not considerate enough of the interest of the public. For instance, for a non-believer, the Manifesto is meaningless; for a Buddhist, it is only evidence of Christian self-interest. I think that the basic question for any theological reflection on religious freedom is: How can we speak about religious freedom in a way which is comprehensible to people of other faiths, while remaining in the context of our Christian faith?

For the Chinese Government, the Manifesto may have two meanings. On the one hand, it may please the Chinese Government because the Protestant churches limit their concern within the area of "*church-affairs*". On the other hand, the Manifesto may cast an illusion to the Chinese Government- the Protestant churches are eager to maintain their prevailing privileged position in society because they do not present a balanced relationship of "*Responsibility and Right*". It appears to me that the Manifesto itself is not a theological

statement, but rather a statement reflecting a sense of fear and insecurity of the churches.

The second perspective is the internal reaction of the churches. There is a hot discussion in regard to the church models among the Hong Kong churches. Some churches suggest to change the model of "church-building base" worship into a "house-church" model because they are afraid that the churches may not be allowed to function as rudimentary place. Furthermore, Christians are encouraged to study the Bible and memorize Biblical verses for the preparation of the possibility of the confiscation of Bibles by the Chinese Government. More importantly, a spirit of martyrdom has been promoted and encouraged. A clear division with the Chinese Government and the uniform religious mode are emphasized. Here, I do not exclude some churches who take the situation seriously. Nevertheless comparatively speaking, they are only a minority.

Thirdly, as regards theological work, the churches in Hong Kong had not experienced a deliberate theological reflection at that time, since the political issues and patriotism were too odd to them. [Historically, the Hong Kong churches only pay attention to charitable work and have seldom interest in political issues.] Therefore, they attempted to employ Liberation Theology [of Latin America] as a possible model. Some even considered the Chinese Government as the oppressor and themselves as the oppressed. But that kind of adaptation is problematic because it does not take their context into consideration. They understood the struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed in terms of the Chinese Government and the people of Hong Kong respectively, but failed to prod deeper to realize that this is an issue between the Chinese Government and Chinese both in China

and Hong Kong. That is to say, they failed to realize the situation in China; about 60% of the population in China are illiterate, and about 70% of the population are peasants. Furthermore, they understood Liberation Theology as a tool to mobilize the churches to criticize the mistakes of the Chinese Government, but failed to understand the essence of the Gospel; that is, the "YES" and "AMEN". Their preference for Liberation Theology appears to be dominated by their middle class interest- the fear of losing properties and privileges- rather than a profound solidarity with the people both in China and Hong Kong.

By 1987, the Hong Kong churches seem to regain their composure. This was reflected in the more mature theological work of the issue of 1997 by Dr. M.K.Yeung. Dr. Yeung is regarded as the first and until recently the only person to make a serious systematic theological reflection of the issue of 1997. His research is published in a book *"Theology of Reconciliation and Church Renewal"*.²³ The major issue of his book is to find the meaning of Christianity to the "*little people*" of Hong Kong. According to his definition, the "*little people*" are those who do not care who will be the emperor. Their concern is whether they can live peacefully. These are the people who cannot leave Hong Kong. He urges that the churches are to serve the "*little people*" and share their burden. Therefore, the churches should avoid making the existing situation worse because eventually, it makes the "*little people*" suffer. The churches should seek the way of reconciliation rather than acting as a pressure group in facing the Chinese Government. He surmises that opposition worsens the situation

23. Dr. M.K.Yeung was until recently a lecturer of theology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He studied theology during the mid 1970s in the University of Edinburgh and Cambridge respectively. His book is published in 1987 and does not have English translation.

rather than solves the problem. According to him, reconciliation means reviving a harmonious relationship. Reconciliation is neither a compromise with communism nor just for the sake of reconciliation, rather it is a reconciliation with people. It promotes human relation; so that man can be reconciled with God. He understands reconciliation from Rom.3:24-26, Rom.5:8-11, Eph.2:11-22, Col.1:19-22 and 2Cor.5:17-21. Reconciliation is through the death of the Son of God; so that men can be reconciled with God. Because of the death of Christ for us, his disciples should learn from him to die for others. Practically, if there is an unjust situation, reconciliation can take place only if the unrighteous side returns what it has taken from the other or if the deprived side is willing to forgive and forget its exploiters. If neither responds in kind, reconciliation is only possible if there is a redeemer who sacrifices himself for them. That is the role which the Hong Kong churches should play in the relationship between China and Hong Kong. In order to fulfill their mission of reconciliation, the historical "wound" of the Hong Kong churches must first be healed. Therefore, there is a need for the renewal of pastoral ministry. If the churches have been healed, then they can take up the ministry of healing and play a role as a mediator in the society like Christ between God and man. Through God's healing of man and the reconciliation between God and man, man can use the love of God to love rather than to revenge.

Dr. Yeung claims that reconciliation is not a choice, but rather a commandment. In order to carry out the ministry of reconciliation in society, he suggested that: Firstly, the churches should help the people face their past experiences and then, encourage them to express their fear. At the same time, the churches can share the hurt of their wound and assist in healing process. Secondly, the churches

should help the people to find the meaning to live. Dr. Yeung claims that the danger is not the fact that the future is hopeless, but the fact that the people do not have a meaning to sustain them to live. Thirdly, the churches should work with the community at a common aim. Dr. Yeung successfully introduces the model of reconciliation and suggests what the Hong Kong churches should do in a new era. His work is not left without criticisms. Some have argued that his research is mainly in the area of the Church; that is, how the Church should renew its inner life. He does not refer specifically to how reconciliation can be carried out between the Church and the Hong Kong society, between the churches in China and Hong Kong, or between the Chinese Government and Hong Kong. Moreover, after the Tienanmen Square Massacre, the dramatic change of the political and social situation of Hong Kong certainly requires the re-consideration and re-interpretation of the model of reconciliation.

After the Tienanmen Square Massacre, the Hong Kong churches- like the people of Hong Kong- were suddenly awakened. In the last 30 years, the churches in Hong Kong were satisfied with their charitable role- building schools and providing social services- while political issues, like policies-making and patriotism were seldom discussed in their agenda. In their sudden awakening, the churches are more socially and politically concerned. Two most remarkable examples are as follows: Firstly, the "*Hong Kong Christian Patriotic and Democratic Movement*", the initial Christian political institution with support from the churches was formed on June 24, 1989. Secondly, the Hong Kong Christian Council issued the Hong Kong Mission Manifesto in the 1990s which has some distinctive features which were seldom found in the past. For instance, ".....At this period of political transition, responding to God's demands for justice, the churches should work with

the people of Hong Kong to seek a political structure which provides a high degree of self-government, and upholds human rights, freedom, democracy and the rule of law....." These two examples indicate that the churches are breaking through the traditional political taboos; that is, the Church should only concern itself with spiritual affairs and not political issues. Here, I do not deny that some churches are becoming more ghetto-like.

The relationship between the churches in China and in Hong Kong is very ambiguous. In 1987, Bishop Ting in an interview said firmly that the principles of the "Three-Self Patriotic Movement" would not be valid in Hong Kong. Concurrently, he said that the churches in China and Hong Kong should follow the principle of "*Three-Mutuals*"; that is, mutual non-interference, mutual non-subordination and mutual-respect.²⁴ One must ask: What is then the base-line of these "*Three-Mutuals*"? To what extent will an action be regarded as "a communion of saints" or interference? Deng Xiaomeng- an editor of a periodical "*Bridge*"- discussed the relationship between the churches in China and Hong Kong in the article "*Be Honest*".²⁵ He comments that the weakness of the "*Three-Mutuals*" is the word "*interference*". He considers that the interest of the churches of Hong Kong and of China are not in an attitude of interference, but in a spirit of the communion of saints. It is because the churches of China and Hong Kong are the body of Christ. Thus, it is impossible to distinguish between "*ours*" and "*yours*". He urges both sides to be honest. He argues that "Three-self" is the servant of the Church but not the master of the Church. The preciousness of "Three-self" is to help and meet the needs of the

24. *Ecumenical Press Service*, 1987.07.02.

25. *Message* by Hong Kong Christian Council, March, 1990. [Chinese edition].

Bridge is a periodical concerning the churches in China. It has both English and Chinese edition.

Church, but not to be an obstacle of the development of the Church. However, the concrete definition and the base line of "*Three-Mutuals*" can be known only through an unceasing practical encounter.

In the shadow of 1997, the Hong Kong people and churches will have reached the crossroads. Firstly, they are at the crossroad of either being patriotic or revolutionaries. In the eyes of the Chinese Government, patriotism means to love the Communist Party, therefore, any form of criticism of the Communist Party is considered revolutionary. That is why the Chinese Government interpreted the democratization movement in Beijing in 1989 as a revolution. Secondly, they are at the crossroad of either preserving their economic prosperity, political stability, and/or struggling for a humane and just society. To say nothing against the Chinese Government and even to please it may be a way to guarantee stability and prosperity. The question remains whether or not this is a route which the people and the churches of Hong Kong wish to travel. One best Chinese tradition reminds us: "*A choice between bear's paw and fish*".²⁶ That means to sacrifice one's life for righteousness. It is the choice of either placing one's personal interest at the top or the fate of the Chinese race.

Hong Kong has been kidnapped for more than a hundred years. The return to China is hard for both China and Hong Kong. Because of their cultural, social, political and economic differences, it is extremely difficult for either side to adjust itself and to adapt to each other's differences. In order to fulfill the dream of "*One*

26. It is a analogy made by Mencius. Both bear's paw and fish were invaluable in ancient time. It implies the difficulty of the choice between one's self interest and the righteousness. Finally, he preferred to fulfill righteousness rather than to preserve one's own interest.

country, Two systems", the people of Hong Kong need to learn to accept China as their motherland and not solely to project their past experience on to the future. On the other hand, China needs to learn to accept the uniqueness of Hong Kong, and more importantly, she must not treat the people of Hong Kong as she treats her people in China. The road of the future is wearisome, but the future is boundless. History is not pre-determined, and the people living in China and Hong Kong have the right to write their own history.

D. A theological reflection

After 1997, Hong Kong will become a Special Administrative Region within the People's Republic of China. It is a new experiment by the Chinese Government; that is to say, an experiment in the possibility of the co-existence of capitalism and socialism. This experiment has two implications. The first is that Hong Kong can still enjoy its existing freedom and maintain its status quo for fifty years after 1997. Pessimistically, these fifty years can be regarded as a transitional period for the people of Hong Kong to adjust themselves to the socialist system in China. This is from rather a political perspective. Optimistically, the Chinese Government expects that it can catch up with the social and economic development of Hong Kong within fifty years. Thus, there will be no more need for two systems. This is mainly from an economic perspective. [Personally, I am optimistic towards the future of Hong Kong in terms of neither political nor economic views, but in the vast open possibilities in front of us.] The second implication is that Hong Kong and China will no longer be two independent lands. They will be one country. They are mutually related and dependent as in the Chinese proverb which speaks of "*the relationship between lip and teeth*."¹ This is especially true of Hong Kong. Politically, Hong Kong is too small to influence China. But if we only hold the view that the survival of Hong Kong is completely dependent on China, 1997 is certainly a sad prospect for the people of Hong Kong. Furthermore, this view will only make Hong Kong like a puppet which tries its best to please the Chinese Government for the sake of its survival. Even though I am deeply aware how influential China is on Hong Kong, I totally reject this view and this interpretation of the relationship between China

1. This analogy implies that any side being hurt causes the other side to suffer.

and Hong Kong. The position of Hong Kong should not be so passive and defensive. It has its active and constructive side; that is to say, Hong Kong can serve as a base for the "*modernisation*" of China. What I mean by modernisation is not only from the economic and technological perspectives, as the Chinese Government often understands it. What China needs is not only economic modernisation, but also cultural modernisation. Therefore, modernisation implies movement towards the openness of political structure- the introduction of democracy; movement towards a sound spiritual life- no monopoly of truth [Marxism-Leninism-Maoism]; and movement towards humanization- a respect of human rights and concern for human welfare. To be a modern country is to be modernized in this sense.

Understood from this perspective, 1997 is indeed an opportunity for Hong Kong to be a contributor to the modernisation of China, since Hong Kong has had a long contact with the outside world. This demands a profound understanding of the situation in China, and a total commitment to and identification with the Chinese in China and Hong Kong. This is the point of departure of my theological reflection about the churches in Hong Kong facing 1997. Even though I am deeply aware of the fact of what the Chinese Government did in Tienanmen Square in June 1989, I think that a one-sided confrontation and non-cooperation with the Chinese Government does no good to the people. I accept Mencius' idea of the mandate of Heaven given to the people. It is the people who have the right to accept who is the ruler or government. The present government in China has already lost the trust of the people. Now it is up to Heaven to tell the people what to do next. During the time of waiting for Heaven to give its mandate, I think that the Hong Kong churches should hold a more constructive view of society than a negative attitude. That is to

say, the Hong Kong churches should endeavour to be involved in the modernisation of China rather than waiting for another democratization movement. If the Hong Kong churches take their responsibility for the modernisation of China seriously, 1997 is no longer a problem of survival; that is to say, whether the churches can function as usual. The task of the Hong Kong churches should not merely be inward-looking or only pay attention to their structural re-adjustment, but it is rather to be an "*eccentric*" Church- a church for the world.

In the previous section, I referred to the historical "*wound*" of the people of Hong Kong. Thus, these two elements- modernisation and wound- serve as a context for my theological reflection, while ecumenically, Hromadka's and Lochman's understanding of Christian witness plays a role in the dialogue which forms part of my reflection. In the following, I will discuss, firstly, the relationship between theology and history; secondly, Christian hope in relation to the historical "*wound*"; and finally, a struggle for democratization and humanization. All these three areas are essential themes which I find that the Hong Kong churches should seriously consider in the shadow of 1997. These three are not mutually independent, but mutually related in terms of dialectic. That is to say, firstly, it deals with the inner life of the Church (the relationship between theology and history); this examination leads the Church to find a concrete contribution to society (Christian hope); and lastly, through the previous work, the Church and the world work together for a better humanized society (democratization). These three areas should be taken at the same time rather than a choice of either one of these.

In order to live their mission seriously, the Hong Kong churches should, first of all, examine their view of the relationship between history and theology. In the light of the experience of Hromadka and Lochman, I consider that it is an error to divide history into salvation history and world history which are independent of one another, since God acts in history. In this understanding, the relationship between history and theology has a threefold meaning. Firstly, God's involvement is not only in men's hearts, but also in their daily lives. The Incarnation of God reveals that religion is no private affair but the acknowledgement that God is actively present in this world. Thus, salvation history is not something divorced and segregated from world history. The Church does not have to withdraw from the world in order to become the Body of Christ; rather it is his body by being in the midst of the world. Secondly, a believer's interpretation of God's acts in history nevertheless remains an ambivalent matter. God's activities cannot be derived directly from history because history is full of contradictions, puzzles and confusions. But because of the gift of Holy Spirit, believers can perceive something of God's providence in the midst of human confusion. God's activities in history are therefore for the eye of faith simultaneously revealed and hidden. We should indeed be very modest in our efforts since we can never completely fathom history. We may never simplistically distinguish between light and dark—especially since our interpretation is easily determined by our own prejudices and predilections; we see God at work only where and when it suits us. Thirdly, Christians must interpret the reality in which they live, yet not so much by judging it as by making the most of their talents; so that they can discern, however imperfectly, who their fellow servants are and who are in need of their help. The observer interprets the facts of history, albeit fallibly. Such a

person has the courage to take decisions, even if they are relatives. He knows, however, that the best way of interpreting history is to allow God to send him into the world.

Facing the shock that was experienced in the Tienanmen Square Massacre and the uncertainty of what will happen after 1997, I think that this understanding of the relationship between history and theology has a lot to say to the Hong Kong churches. It challenges the Hong Kong churches which consider that Christian witness can be a choice of either [personal] spiritual renewal or social involvement. They may argue that this is what the Bible said about one is to serve the Lord according to one's gift (Eph.4:11-12). It is true that the different dimensions of witness to the Lord are always a matter of concrete obedience. It is not a choice, but a only relative emphasis. Furthermore, to take one in isolation from the other is to distort the Gospel. Without spiritual renewal, one's social involvement is merely a humanitarian improvement; and without social involvement, one's spiritual renewal is simply an individual salvation, a living on after death.

The Hong Kong churches should reject any view holding that God is only active in salvation history, while the world history is under the sway of evil powers and always threatens to extinguish salvation history. The world is not dualistic. Jesus Christ is already the Lord of history. No matter how rapid the changes of history, no power can challenge his sovereignty. Therefore, it is a fault to consider that any earthly government [especially, a communist government] is a danger to Christian faith.

The Hong Kong churches should examine their unconscious mind. Because of the frustrating experience during the last forty years of the Chinese Communist Government- the Cultural Revolution and the Tienanmen Square Massacre- and being reinforced by the recent breakdown of communist rule in eastern Europe, the Hong Kong churches can easily be tempted to hold that communism means the depreciation of human dignity. But their weakness is to neglect how far they have been identified with a bourgeois, liberal view of society and with the bourgeois life-style. Although the outcome may be the same [non-acceptance of communist governments], the Hong Kong churches need to be aware of their ideological captivity to the present social and economic order [capitalism]. Otherwise, they are unfit for bearing the word of reconciliation and salvation to mankind.

The Hong Kong churches should be careful of any theological attempt at interpreting historical events. Christians in Hong Kong try to look for a theological explanation of the Tienanmen Square event. Some suggest that it is a judgment of God because historically, the Chinese reject the Gospel.[Ps.33:12] Therefore, they suggest that China needs both to be evangelized and democratized. It seems to me that they imply that the West is so "advanced" and "stable" because it believes in God. Others regard the Chinese Communist Party as evil and any form of co-operation with it, is an act of communion with evil. It is true that we can see the signs of history, but we are still to be aware of the fact that history is both hidden and revealed. Our mistake is to identify too simply a particular historical event as the anti-Christ and devil.

The Hong Kong churches should be in solidarity with their contemporaries. They should not be observers of history, but stand by

their people whatever happens. It demands that the churches be the Church in that particular space and at that particular time. This solidarity is not "in" the community, but "of" the community- as a servant. Regarding emigration, the churches should neither promote nor condemn it, but love those emigrants and accept that this is a part of their anxiety and fear. Emigration is not sin. The Hong Kong churches should not create a sense of shame and guilt in emigrants or justify the self-righteous attitude of those who prefer to stay.

Finally, the Hong Kong churches should have the courage to take sides even though no one can know exactly what historical events will mean. The Hong Kong churches should have the courage to make mistakes, and to be blacklisted in order to be the voice of the voiceless. In the coming years, I believe that this courage is particularly important; that is, not to be afraid of losing one's privileges, but to be the witness of the Word at that particular time. On the contrary, the Hong Kong churches should note that they are not a pressure group. They should be aware of the fact that "taking sides" is not a political stand against this or to support that, but calls men back to humanity which is their contribution to modernisation.

In the second place, the Hong Kong churches should help the people of Hong Kong to overcome their fear towards the issue of 1997 by sowing the seed of hope. As said previously, the issue of 1997 brought a shock to the people of Hong Kong. In addition to the recent experience of the Tienanmen Square Massacre, this further intensifies the historical "wound" which is much harder to heal. In his book *"Theology of Reconciliation and Church Renewal"* written in 1987, Dr. Yeung considers that the centre of the issue of 1997 is a matter of

meaning; that is, the people do not know the reason why they should stay in Hong Kong and do not have meaning to their lives for which they should strive.² But I think that it is also a matter of hope. So many times, the hopes of the people from the Chinese Government are disillusioned event after event- from the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution and to the Tienanmen Square Massacre. The people of Hong Kong are not as Dr. Yeung suggested without meaning in their lives, but rather they do not have hope to sustain their meaning in their lives. Here, I find a need which Christian hope could fulfill. Christian hope does not underestimate the futility to which the world is subject. Recognizing the realities of the world situation, Christian hope claims that people must not become prisoners to it. It shares their suffering, but not their bondage; and in the perspective of faith, these suffering are the birth-pangs of a new age, an age already conceived in the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus and slowly but surely gestating in the cosmic womb.[Mt.24:3-31] Christian hope is to take each suffering seriously and to wipe away one's tears. It is hope full of comfort and healing, but at the same time, it is hope which rejects any tendency of privatizing itself and any belief in fatalism. It is hope which is addressed to an individual, but it is not kept at the private level. In the light of the interpretation of eschatology by Hromadka and Lochman, I find that Christian hope is a movement towards comfort, and a resistance movement against fatalism.

History teaches that any hope in governments eventually brings frustration and disappointment, but this does not mean denying the world. Facing a frustrated and suffering situation, people may simply have two reactions. Actively and optimistically speaking, they would

2. M.K.Yeung, *Theology of Reconciliation and Church Renewal* (Hong Kong:Seed Press, 1987), pp.539-545.

seek ways to transform the unfavourable conditions. Passively and pessimistically speaking, they would become self-pitying, and find different methods to forget and conceal their helplessness in reality-escapism. This is expressed in emigration, by being more materialistic, religious or hedonistic. Unfortunately, Hong Kong appears to be largely dominated by the pessimistic view.

Many people in Hong Kong consider that any attempt at changing the Chinese Government is futile. Especially those 90% of the population of Hong Kong who cannot leave may consider that their staying in Hong Kong is only the choice of the choiceless. They accept that their future is determined, is to be suffered and disappointed. In this situation, I do think that the Church's healing ministry is to break down all kinds of archaism, futurism and escapism which may be characteristics of other religions. Its service of hope can be carried out in two ways.

Firstly, the Hong Kong churches should encourage the people of Hong Kong to speak out their fear and sorrow, and sow the seeds of hope through personal contact and counselling. Concerning this matter, the church-leaders of Hong Kong believe that the hopelessness of the people is because they do not have Jesus in their hearts. That is why they have been so eager to hold many mass evangelistic meetings in these recent years. For instance, within the last four years, Dr. Luis Palau and Dr. Billy Graham came to Hong Kong to hold evangelistic meetings. No one can deny that the hopelessness of people is without God. But it seems to me, they fail to realize that incarnation means the presence of God rather than the "*preaching*" about God. The Hong Kong churches need to sink their roots more deeply in the community by identifying themselves with the common folk. Actually this is the

best kind evangelism. This can be done through the vast social resources of the Hong Kong churches and the laity. That is to say, on the one hand, they can mobilize their educational resources and their social services to build up the spirit of concern in interpersonal relations. On the other hand, each believer is a hope-sower. Witness is a man or a woman living in such a way- and looking at the world and everything in it in such a way- as to make other people ask themselves, and ask those who are witnesses, what gives them their unique character. Unique does not mean actions or thoughts of absolute originality which can be recognized as such by friends. It is enough for witness to display certain unexpected resources by which people can live, or help others in coping with their lives, such as, continuing hope in humanity.

Secondly, the Hong Kong churches should help the people of Hong Kong to see the vast possibilities in their future. Christian hope breaks through all kinds of fatalism. It opens out future, making clear that history is not a circular movement as Taoists believe it to be. The future is not yet written. It is hope against pre-determinism, hopelessness and any form of escapism. No matter how seriously they suffer and how profoundly they are disappointed in history, Christian hope shows them that their future is not a one way road. Furthermore, the previous despair will not necessarily continue in their future. Because of this, they have a new possibility. No matter how dark the day is, God invites the people to work with him to create a new tomorrow. It is the message of hope which the Church itself should believe, insist and proclaim. The best way to overcome fatalism is to hold a constructive attitude, to participate in society; that is, a commitment to humanization and democratization.

The message of hope is neither an illusion which conceals the real crisis in relation to 1997 nor an attempt to fool the people of Hong Kong to believing that the future of China and Hong Kong is brighter than before. But it is hope which heals their past unhappiness [the historical wound] and today's frustration. It is hope which is rooted in God and breaks through all kinds of fatalism. I am not an idealist who believes that the history of mankind must be in the direction of getting better, but the hope which I hold can transcend my anxiety and fears, and any political prediction. It calls for responsibility because it is a costly hope. Here, the recent events of eastern Europe can serve as an opportunity for the Hong Kong churches to communicate to the people of Hong Kong what hope is, but it should note that their experiences are the examples of not losing hope, and are not the path to success.

More than 2500 years ago, the prophet Jeremiah wrote a letter that has some relevance to the situation in Hong Kong. Composed in a time of crisis, it is addressed to Jews living in exile in Babylon. The leaders of the exiled Jewish community seemed only too willing to put their trust in their own interpretations of the political events of the time and to listen to "expert" advice to prepare to leave the "*country of no future*". Jeremiah's letter warns against rumours and false expectations based on so-called human "*insights*", because these will all lead to disaster. Rather, the prophet says, the people should see their future in the land of their captivity and put their trust in God. He is the Lord of history and reigns over the lives of nations.

Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters..... Also seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you in exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper..... Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you..... "For I know

the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and future." (Jer.29:5-11)

In the third place, the Hong Kong churches should look for a common goal with the people of Hong Kong, so that they can co-operate and overcome their fear. Two criteria should be taken into account in this searching. On the one hand, this goal should be found in the aim of the transformation of society instead of in the aim of the confirmation of political structure and the conservation of the status quo. On the other hand, this goal must be beyond one's self interest or situation; that is, it must be seen from a higher vantage point. These two criteria can give a wider scope to the people of Hong Kong to assess happiness and sorrow, success and failure so that they will not be bounded by their circumstances.

After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Hromadka and Lochman urged the churches not to give up, and unceasingly "to overthrow all conditions under which man is an oppressed, enslaved, destitute, and despised being." I find that a commitment to humanization and democratization, which can meet the above two criteria, are an encounter point between the Hong Kong churches and the people there. A good opportunity is provided for the Hong Kong churches to have a common goal with the people of Hong Kong after the Tienanmen Square Massacre. For instance, many people in Hong Kong know more clearly the reasons why they should stay in Hong Kong. This is no longer the choice of the choiceless, but has a clear purpose; that is, to establish a democratic China. As regards this, the Hong Kong churches should remove the illusion that the people of Hong Kong may have either human rights or economic development; human rights or national security; freedom or bread. Against such false dichotomies the Church must assert that human rights cannot be subservient to any earthly

system. To divert the people from their dignity by offering a false choice is too often a ploy to retain political power. In order to carry it out concretely, the Hong Kong churches should support that the Bill of Rights ought to be included in the Basic Law and democratization.³ On the other hand, they should have no hesitation in pointing out any act of violation of human rights by the Chinese Government, and remind the governments of China and Britain to implement the promises of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, and see to it that the Basic Law will uphold a society which respects human rights, practises justice and shows equality and benevolence.

Secondly, the Hong Kong churches should remember that they have a sense of responsibility for China and its civilization. They should work with the people of Hong Kong to take the initiative in seeking out opportunities to make their contributions in the process of "*modernisation*" for China.

Thirdly, the Hong Kong churches should warn the politicians in Hong Kong whether or not they are working for the welfare of the people of Hong Kong. In addition, the Hong Kong churches should keep an eye on the interest of the low-income people. They should not be the sacrifice for the democratization of society. Otherwise, democratization is only a middle class interest. Democratization and humanization [the concern of social welfare] must go hand in hand. More importantly, the Hong Kong churches should point out any inhuman system existing in the present capitalist structure.

3. That is, the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", United Nations General Assembly, December 10, 1948, and "Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" and "Covenant on Civil and Political Rights", United Nations General Assembly, December 16, 1966.

The above study is only an indication to show the possible way in which the Hong Kong churches can find their own path according to their respective traditions. It cannot be mistaken that this is an instruction for the Hong Kong churches to be followed step by step. Furthermore, an important factor is missed out in the above discussion; that is to say, the significance of Chinese culture. To give some examples: Firstly, when the Sino-British Declaration on the question of Hong Kong was signed in 1984, many people in Hong Kong hoped and prayed that Deng XiaoPing would not pass away soon because his survival could guarantee the promise that Hong Kong would remain unchanged for fifty years after 1997. Their hope reflects their weakness because they relied on a saviour [a good leader] coming from heaven to help them rather than seeing that it was a problem of the governmental structure. It may be argued that many people in Hong Kong are realistic because they do know that it is very hard to change the Chinese Government. But after talking to the Chinese coming from China and Taiwan, I find that many of them hold the same view that they hope for a good leader instead of a good system. This view is a typical traditional Chinese way of thinking by "*submissive people*". It rules out one's responsibility, and culturally, this may be one of the factors to explain why democracy is hard to take root in areas influenced by Confucianism. Secondly, the Chinese are people who take so much care of the "*face*" which they show to others. Because of this, they do not easily share their inner struggles and feelings. It is an obstacle for healing. Regarding this cultural uniqueness, the Hong Kong churches should proclaim the Word of God clearly and take the cultural factor seriously. Then, the cultural heritage of the Chinese Christians can be challenged, appreciated and transformed. Otherwise, the Word of God still remains alienated from their experience and as a foreign product.

In the Chinese understanding, the word "*crisis*" has a twofold meaning, namely, danger and opportunity. It is a typical word to describe the churches in Hong Kong facing 1997. If the Hong Kong churches understand 1997 only in the narrow sense of religious freedom and the possibility of their external form of existence, then the crisis of 1997 is certainly dangerous- a danger of self-isolation and self-interest. If the Hong Kong churches consider it as a time to reflect on their existing ecclesiastical structures, their theological standpoint, their solidarity with the people, their responsibility towards the Chinese both in China and Hong Kong, then the crisis of 1997 is certainly an opportunity- opening a road to the people. Therefore, for the Church, the danger is not coming from 1997, but is rather coming from the Church itself. That is to say, whether the Church takes its mission seriously. Furthermore, no point in human history can be regarded as either a blessing or a blasphemy. The experience of Hromadka and Lochman provide the Hong Kong churches with a possibility that they could not only survive in a hostile situation, but also be active and influential. Despite that, Hromadka's and Lochman's struggle would only serve as an encouragement for the Hong Kong churches to find their own path of Christian witness in their particular context rather than to copy the Czechoslovak model.

Finally, I would like to use the words of Hromadka and Lochman respectively to conclude my study of Christian witness in a communist context. Before the February event in 1948, Hromadka warned:

The opportunities of the Church are tremendous! There does not exist any plan or tendency to impair her life and activity. If she should fail, it will be on account of her own weakness, cowardice, and lack of vision.⁴

4. J.L.Hromadka, "Changing Europe and the Christian Faith." In: *Theology Today*, Vol.III (1946), p.31.

After the February event, Hromadka warned:

We are in a danger of a defeat in the fight of spiritual fronts, not in danger of a defeat by force from the outside, but by our inward weakness and fatigue.⁵

After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Lochman wrote:

And still I would immediately like to add that, thank God, we know, as a nation but especially as the Church, about the other aspect also—namely that, in the field of history and in the field of politics and social responsibility, the problem of the power structure, however severe it is, is not the whole and total reality. The world of men is also the world of tanks; but the world of tanks is not the whole world of men. Man has his responsibilities, and they are not in vain; we shall not disregard the tanks and we know they have power; but we shall never forget that this is not what I would call our Alpha and Omega, the first and last word of human history. Our responsibility is limited, but it is a reality; the sphere of human responsibility is the sphere of history.⁶

The proportion of Christians in China and Hong Kong is less than 1% and less than 10% of the population respectively. Christians are only a minority in society. It seems that the Hong Kong churches are too small to make any impact on society. But I share what M. Opocensky said when, after the overthrow of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in 1989, some said that the Protestant churches in Czechoslovakia did not play such a crucial role as did the Protestant church in East Germany:

I am convinced that the proclamation of the Gospel— the good news of God's Kingdom, God's justice, peace and freedom— prepared the ground of a radical change which eventually took place [that is, the overthrow of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in 1989]. The Biblical models and paradigms worked under the surface— in the hearts of people rather than in the heads.⁷

5. J.L.Hromadka, "The Church of Reformation Faces the Changes." In: *Theology Today*, Vol.VI (1949), p.461.
6. J.M.Lochman, "Reflection on the Resistance." In: *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol.24 (1969), pp.185-186.
7. M.Opocensky, "A New Emerging World Community. A Case Study: Czechoslovakia." In: *Reformed World*, Vol.41 (1990), p.39.

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